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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

AN INTERPRETATION OF THE HUMAN AND NATURAL RESOURCES OF THE NEW WORLD BY THE EARLY SIXTEENTH CENTURY SPANIARD

by

© PEDRO-ALBERTO PEREZ ALEJOS

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
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DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "An Interpretation of the Human and Natural Resources of the New World by the Early Sixteenth Century Spaniard", submitted by Pedro-Alberto Pérez Alejos in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Supervisor

David C. Johnson

DATE 19th July 1976

ABSTRACT

A study is made of the role played by cultural values and attitudes in the perception and evaluation of a particular biophysical environment. The perception and evaluation of the natives and lands of the New World by the sixteenth century Spaniards were guided by the value system and attitudes towards the world and life which dominated their thinking and behavior. The more generalized manifestation of these attitudes took the form of a preoccupation with gaining and upholding honor. The perception and evaluation of the New World environment were greatly influenced by this preoccupation.

The appraisal of the worth of the New World inhabitants and the estimate of their characters became, in many ways, independent of the particular behavior and culture exhibited by the Indian. Driven by a desire to maintain seigneury and live as a lord, the Spaniard did not fail to see in the Indian a being who could fit his purpose admirably; consequently, the Indian was portrayed as a man of inferior qualities and culture, destined to obey, serve and be guided by the Spaniard.

The cultural attitudes of the sixteenth century Spaniard were not favorable to the development of natural resources and the creation and accumulation of capital. The Spaniard busied himself above all in gaining and upholding honor, while believing any personal involvement in the production of material wealth to be disgraceful.

It is the writer's belief that the economic behavior of the sixteenth century Spaniard in the New World cannot be understood properly without a careful consideration of the inner beliefs, longings and aspirations which motivated these men to action.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writer wishes to thank his supervisor, Professor J.F. Bergmann for his help during the course of the study. The assistance of Professors A. Forcadas and D.C. Johnson in many discussions is gratefully acknowledged. More recently, the patience of Professors S.I. Smith and D.C. Johnson in reading the revised thesis is appreciated.

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INTRODUCTION

An examination of the interpretation that a group of people have placed on the human and natural resources of an environment falls into the more general relations between such group of people and the total natural and social environments with which they are in contact.

The concept of natural and human "resources" did not exist in the mind of the early sixteenth century Spaniard with the same connotations that it carries in our own mind. The geographer Carl O. Sauer has pointed out that the concept of natural resources is largely derived from our own society' s ceaseless attempt at finding new and more intensive uses for natural materials. In the same way, the economic organization of modern industrial societies, on a basis of competetiveness, increased production and technical advancement, has brought into relief the economic importance of a qualified, efficient and educated labor force. Sauer, with great insight, has considered resources as cultural appraisals. This means that the existence of resources is conditional upon a value judgement which accords to certain elements of the physical or biological environment the attribute of being valued as resources. In its turn, the evaluation of the environment is guided by culture. It is cultures that "define and validate notions of progress and decline, of abundance and scarcity, of utility and injury, of beauty and ugliness, of right and wrong."[1]

Peter Martyr d' Anghera, an Italian humanist living at the Spanish court, gives a clear proof of having noticed the influence of culture on human judgements when he commented (c. 1520) that:

> The Ethiopian thinks that black is a more beautiful

> color than white, while the white man thinks the opposite. A bald man thinks himself more handsome than a hairy one, and a man with a beard laughs at him who is without one. We are influenced by passions rather than guided by reason, and the human race accepts these foolish notions, each country following its own fancy.[2]

Appraisals are, then, profoundly affected by society and culture. As each social system organizes the world in accordance with its particular structure and requirements, so each culture -- as we will have occasion to see later in more detail -- screens perception of the milieu in harmony with its particular styles and techniques.[3] It is then necessary to understand man and his culture before we can understand landscapes; we must understand what limits of physical and mental strain his body will bear; we must learn which choices his culture makes available to him and what sanctions his fellows impose upon him to deter him from transgression and to encourage him to conform.[4]

But, after having already made use of the term frequently enough, it is necessary to explain what we understand by "culture". The term "culture" has a broad meaning, is subject to different interpretations and, therefore, needs clarification. Sauer defines culture as "the learned and conventionalized activity of a group that occupies an area."[5]

To the geographers Broek and Webb, culture is "the total way of life of a people." In a more explicit characterization, stressing that culture consists of learned behavior, they define it as "an historically derived system of standardized forms of behavior which is acquired by the individual as a member of society."[6] According to this definition we can say that the cultural behavior learned by, and inculcated in, the early sixteenth century Spanish individual was to accompany him to the New World, where it would guide and direct his actions in certain ways.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin examines the concept of culture with more depth than either Sauer or Broek and Webb. By human culture this author refers to the manifold process according to which any human population, whenever left to itself, immediately starts spontaneously to arrange itself at a social level into an organized system of ends and means, in which two basic components are always present (Figure 1). First, a material component, or "increase in complexity", which includes both the various types of implements and techniques necessary to gathering or producing all kinds of food or supplies and the various rules or laws which provide the best conditions for an optimum birth rate or for a satisfactory circulation of goods and resources within the limits of the population under consideration. Secondly, a spiritual component, or "increase in consciousness"; namely, some particular outlook on the world and life (an approach which is at once philosophical, ethical, aesthetic and religious), the function of which is to impart a meaning, a direction, and an incentive or stimulus to the material activities and development of the community.[7]

- The basic components of culture
  - 1. Material (increase in complexity)
    - implements and techniques
    - rules and laws
  - 2. Spiritual (increase in consciousness)
    - particular outlook on world and life; imparts meaning and direction to the material activities of the community

Figure 1

Chardin's analysis of the concept of culture is of great worth for the distinction it makes between the material and spiritual components of culture. In the context of this thesis, by examining the outlook on the world and life characteristic of the early sixteenth century Spaniards, we will be able to gain a better understanding of their perception of the lands and natives of the New World and their cultural attitudes with respect to life and the use of human and natural resources.

What were the cultural attitudes and dispositions towards the world and life of the early sixteenth century Spaniards? What kind of wishes, desires and aspirations motivated them to action and influenced their perception of the New World environment? An attempt is made to answer these questions and to demonstrate the close relationship that exists between the particular nature of Chardin's "spiritual component" of a culture and the interpretation and use of the resources of a particular environment.

Next we will turn our attention to an analysis of important terms, concepts and ideas that need to be understood, before proceeding to a discussion of the specific subject.

NOTES

[1] Hugh Prince, "Real, Imagined and Abstract Worlds of the Past"; Progress in Geography, International Reviews of Current Research, vol. 3, 1971, p. 40.

[2] De Orbe Novo, The Eight Decades of Peter Martyr d'Anghera; trans. by Francis Augustus MacNutt; New York and London, G.P. Putnam and Sons, 1912, 2 vols.; Fourth Decade, Book 7.

[3] See David Lowenthal, "Geography, Experience and Imagination: Towards a Geographical Epistemology", Annals of the Association of American Geographers (hereafter abbreviated A.A.A.G.), vol. 51, 1961, p. 252.

[4] Hugh Prince, op. cit., p. 44.

[5] Carl O. Sauer, "Foreword to Historical Geography", A.A.A.G., vol. 31, 1941, p. 1.

[6] Jan O.M. Broek and John W. Webb, A Geography of Mankind; New York, McGraw Hill Book Co., 1968.

[7] Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, "The Antiquity and World Expansion of Human Culture", in Man's Role in Changing the Face of the Earth; William R. Thomas and others, eds., Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1956, pp. 106-107.

CHAPTER I

THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To begin with, it is necessary to explain the general meaning of some key words and concepts of which frequent use will be made in this thesis.

Perception: Perception is both the response of the senses to external stimuli and purposeful activity in which certain phenomena are clearly registered, while others recede in the shade or are blocked out. Much of what we perceive is of value to us, for biological survival, and for providing certain satisfactions which are rooted in culture.[1]

There are two main types of perception that can be recognized: designative perceptions and appraisive perceptions.[2] Designative perceptions are those perceptions we have of the attributes of places or persons and which are devoid of all evaluation of those attributes. Examples: The Sahara Desert is arid; Greece is a Mediterranean country; Paul is twenty years old. Appraisive perceptions, on the other hand, are the value judgements that we have of places, things and persons. Examples: Greece is a beautiful country; Paul is a mean person; Uncontrolled smoking is evil. This latter type of perception is the one with which we are going to be concerned in this study.

It could be said that designative perceptions are objective judgements on things, persons or places, while appraisive perceptions are subjective judgements. Both types of perception, however, are dependent upon the cultural background of the individual observer. The aridity of the Sahara conveys different images to different people; to an outside observer coming from a humid country the aridity of the Sahara will appear much more evident than to the local nomad.

Furthermore, the power of culture in influencing perception is such that it can bring people to see and believe in things which do not exist; it can cause group hallucination.[3] By the same token, the perceptions of individuals can be so thoroughly moulded by traditional dogma that the most intense fears can be caused by objectively innocuous stimuli. In many cases it is the culturally derived "Einstellung" (or image), rather than the stimuli themselves, that serve to explain the perception and behavior of individuals.[4] It seems admissible, then, to state that truth is not given through any objective consideration of the evidence, but rather that it is subjectively embraced as part of one's total experience and outlook.[5]
Attitude: Attitude is primarily a cultural stance, a position one takes vis-a-vis the world. It has greater stability than perception and is formed by a long succession of perceptions; that is, of experience. Infants perceive, but have no well formed attitude other than that given by biology. Infants live in an environment but they barely have a world, and they have no world view.[6]
World view: The world view, or the world image, is formed by conceptualized experience. It is partly personal, largely social. It can be considered as an attitude or belief system; the word "system" implies that the attitudes and beliefs are structured, however arbitrary the links may seem, from an impersonal (objective) standpoint.[7]

Because perception and behavior are guided by the individual's world image, it is convenient to examine in more detail the nature and characteristics of images. In the description which follows the writer has made use of Kenneth Boulding's theories on the image.[8]
Images: One's image of the world is related to one's knowledge of the

world. The difference between the two is, however, that while knowledge has an implication of validity and truth, the image, on the other hand, is composed by that which an individual believes to be true and valid, by subjective -- and not objective -- knowledge.[9] Every individual is located in space, time, in a field of personal relations, in the world of nature (in a world of how things operate), in a world of subtle intimations and emotions. All of these things of which the individual is aware and which he believes to be true constitute his subjective knowledge of the world and himself; they are the image he has of the world.[10]

The image is built up as a result of all past experiences of the possessor. Part of the image is, then, the history of the image itself, as the image is constantly being affected by new experiences to which the individual is exposed. But images, although affected by new experiences and inflow of information are, by their own nature, resistant to change. Information hostile to the image is only accepted with great difficulty; information that fits well into the structure of the existing image is easily accepted. This, in itself, can be easily understood; information contrary to the image can only be accepted by radical modification of the image which, in some cases, will entail the total restructuring of it or the creation of a new one. The degree of stability of an image and its resistance to change depends on its internal consistency and arrangement. Some images are remarkably resistant to change while others tend to modify and restructure themselves with relative ease.

In contrast to animals, human beings have the capacity for organizing information into large and complex images. The image of humans is further characterized by a far greater degree of self-consciousness and self-awareness than that of animals. In fact, only man has what could properly be called self-consciousness; that is, an image of his image. The image of man is characterized also by a phenomenal capacity for internal growth and development quite independent of experiences and information received from the outside. In this realm of man with which we are here concerned, it is important to distinguish between the two kinds of images:[11]

Images of fact: These represent facts of an objective, rather evident character, which tend to exist independently of the cultural values of the observer.

Images of value: These depend on the scale of valuation or the value system of the individual. They are the ones with which this thesis is concerned and they will be treated in further detail.

The value system of a given society determines the image which that society has of itself and of the world in which it lives. Values are not inherent in the individual's biological constitution, but rather are taught to, and learned by him from his early years. Education in most societies is a matter of harnessing the biological drives in the interests of establishing the value system of a society. From early childhood "we are surrounded by an impressive symphony of declarations, commandments, dedications, confirmations, resolutions and reaffirmations"[12] which serve to implant in us the value system of the society in which we are born. Not only society in general, but peers and family in particular exercise a strong influence upon the individual, and he soon learns to view life as they do, and to accept the sanctions that are applied to the dissident. Even the very words the individual learns to use incline him towards a particular view of the universe.[13] By growing up in a certain language, by thinking in its semantic and syntactical grooves, he acquires a certain more or less uniform outlook of the world. Language shapes and fashions the frame in which experience is set, and different languages achieve this in different ways.[14]

It is then clear that, through many different means and all kinds of pressures, the human individual gradually becomes imbued with the value system and the concomitant value images of the society in which he has been born a member. These value images, structured together, form the world view of an individual. On the basis of his world view he will give being to, and will incorporate into his image of the world, the elements of the surrounding world of whose existence he is becoming aware. As the historian Edmundo O'Gorman has pointed out:

> ...... the being -- not the existence -- of things is nothing but the meaning of significance which they are given within the overall framework of the picture of reality accepted as true at some historical moment. In other words, the being of things is not something that they contain within themselves, but something that is assigned or granted to them.[15]

The same applies to individuals: to a man in love with a woman, she _is_ a very different person from what she is to a man who is indifferent to her, because, by virtue of the one man's passion and the other's indifference, she has been simultaneously granted two forms of being according to the two different meanings that have been given to her, although, in this case, they coincide in the generic. To both men she _is_ a woman, though covetable and perfect for one of them, negligible and plain for the other.[16]

The early sixteenth century Spaniard, who, as will be explained later, came to the New World with the intention of gaining honor and maintaining seigneury, perceived the Indian as a being which was destined to obey and serve him. The Puritan British settlers of North America, on the other hand, saw the Indian as an obstacle to the well-being and territorial expansion of the community and, as such, a being that had to be removed as soon as it proved expedient.

After the preceeding discussions we are better prepared to examine two conceptual schemes, or theoretical models, which consider, within an over-all framework, the interrelationships among value systems, images, perception and behavior. These models have been prepared by two geographers and are directed toward facilitating an understanding of the complex functioning of the process of environmental perception and behavior.

In Roger M. Downs schema (Figure 2) the real world, or the surrounding environment, is taken as the starting point, and it is represented as a source of information. The information content enters the individual through a system of perceptual receptors, and the precise meaning of the information is determined by an interaction between the individual's value system and his image of the world. The meaning of the information is then incorporated into the image. On the basis of this information, the individual may be required to adjust himself with respect to the real world. This requirement is expressed as a decision which can, of course, be one that involves no overt reaction. The links from the concept of a decision are two-fold. The first link is a re-cycling process, called search, whereby the individual searches the real world for more information. This process can continue until either the individual decides that sufficient information has been acquired, or some time/cost limitation acts as a constraint to further search. A decision is then made which may be expressed as a pattern of behavior which will in turn affect the real world. Since the real world undergoes a change, fresh information may result, and the whole process can continue. Downs' schema, therefore, allows the space perception process to occur in a temporal as well as a spatial context.[17]

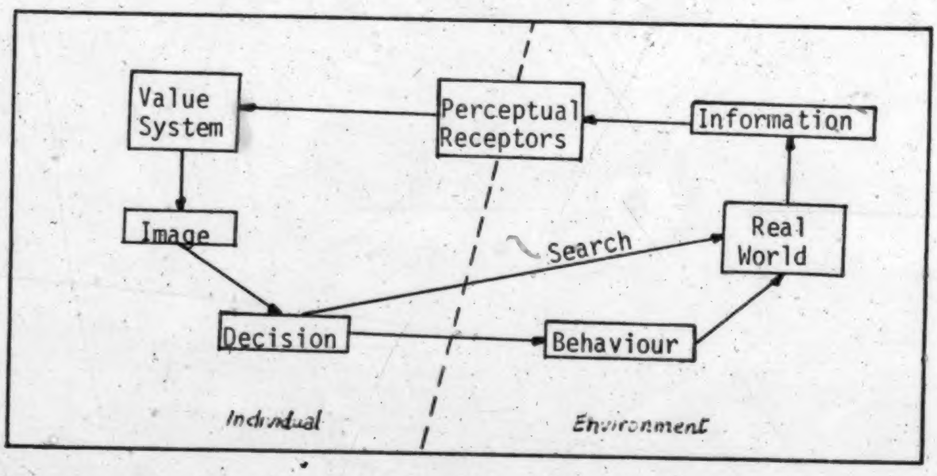
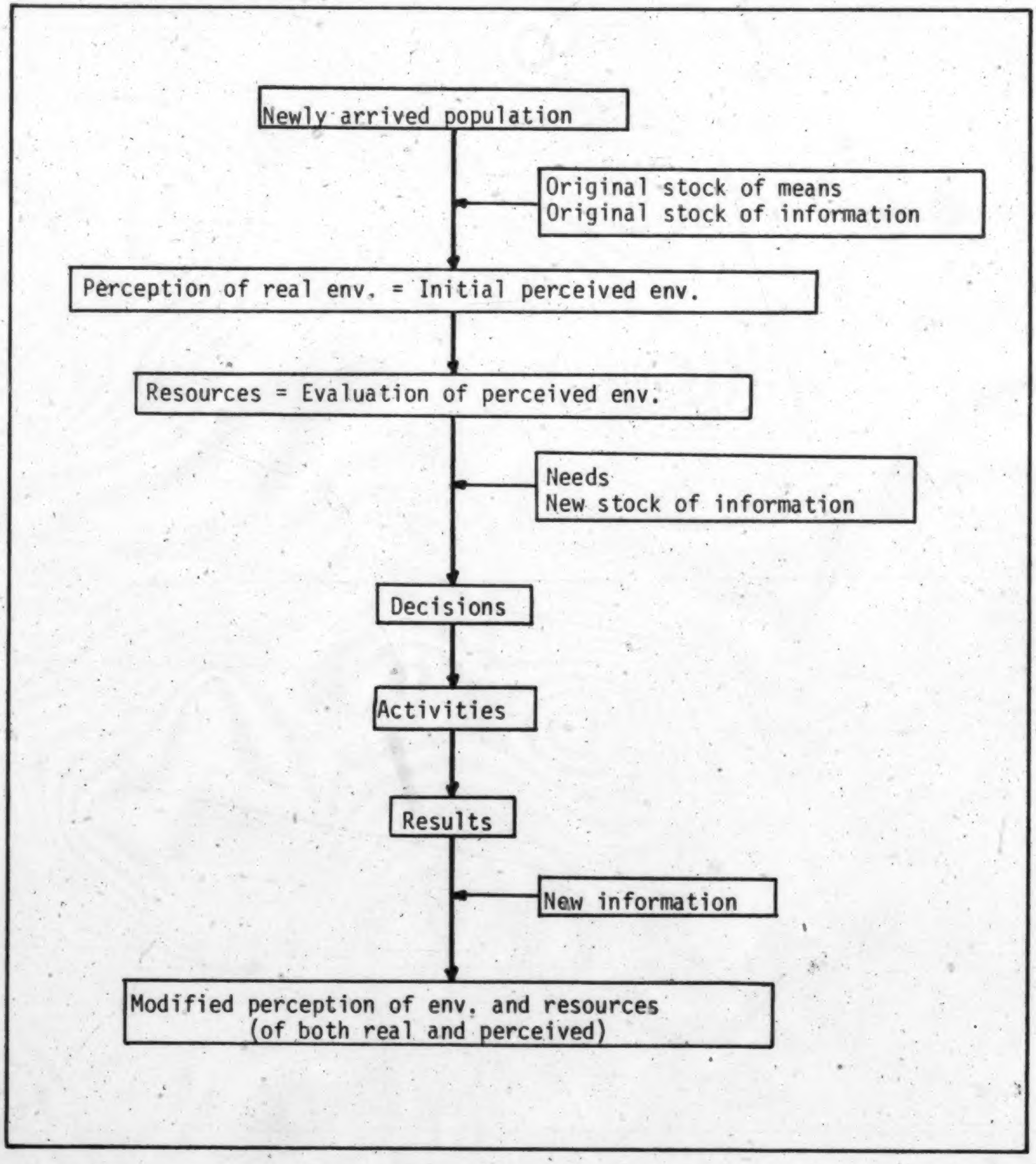


Figure 2. A conceptual schema for research into geographic space perception

Compared with Downs' model, H.C. Brookfield's schema of a "Man-Environment System" fits more closely the situation of the early sixteenth century Spaniard in the New World for it presupposes an unfamiliar environment and a newly arrived population (Figure 3). The author describes his model as follows:

> Starting 'ab initio' in a new environment, with a given stock of means and a given set of imported information, a newly arrived population will assess the real environment with the aid of the available information to yield the initial perceived environment. It is this latter, rather than the

Figure 3. Brookfield's Model of a "Man-Environment System"

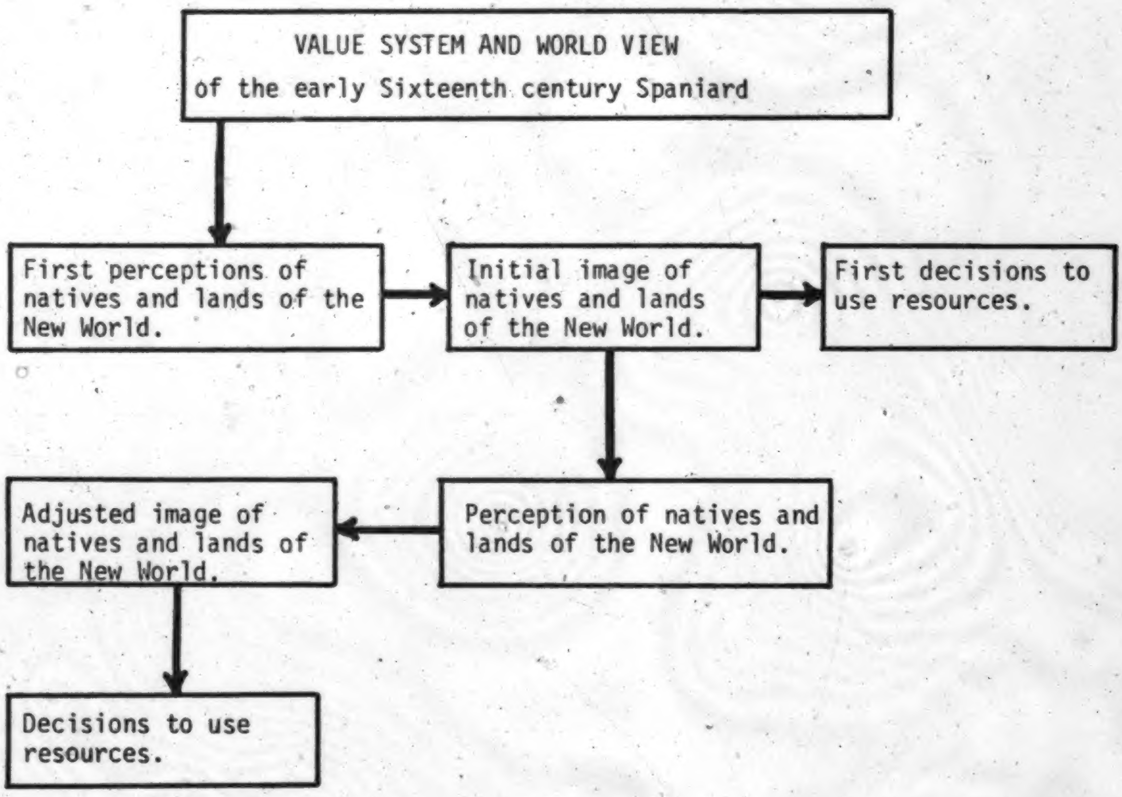

Newly arrived population
Original stock of means
Original stock of information
Perception of real env. = Initial perceived env.
Resources = Evaluation of perceived env.
Needs
New stock of information
Decisions
Activities
Results
New information
Modified perception of env. and resources
(of both real and perceived)

> real environment, which is then evaluated as resources, resulting in a new stock of information added to the imported information. Interacting with needs, this total stock of information then forms the basis for decision. Activities initiated as a result of decisions yield results; these are further evaluated to modify the future decision, both directly and by modifying the perceived environment, and hence the perceived resources.[18]

Both Downs' and Brookfield's models are carefully constructed and integrated. However, given the complexity of the task they attempt to solve, they tend to systematize and over-simplify reality greatly. In spite of this deficiency, these models are useful in the context of this thesis, and they will serve as the general theoretical framework inside which the development of the subject matter of the thesis has to be placed. A narrower theoretical framework, constructed to satisfy the specific requirements of this research, is presented next (Figure 4).

The perception and evaluation of the natives and lands of the New World by the Spaniards were guided by the value system and cultural attitudes which dominated the mind of the Spanish individuals who, directly or indirectly, came into contact with the foreign territories. The early sixteenth century Spaniards perceived and appraised the New World in accordance with the particular character of their world view. Simultaneous with the process of environment perception and appraisal was the process of image formation. At the same time that the environment of the New World was being perceived and evaluated by the Spaniards who had come into contact with it -- as well as by those others who stayed at home and read the reports sent by the former -- an image of the nature and character of the natives, lands and resources of those parts was taking shape in their minds. The first

Figure 4. Environmental perception model adapted to the early sixteenth century Spaniard and the New World.


VALUE SYSTEM AND WORLD VIEW
of the early Sixteenth century Spaniard
First perceptions of natives and lands of the New World.
Initial image of natives and lands of the New World.
First decisions to use resources.
Perception of natives and lands of the New World.
Adjusted image of natives and lands of the New World.
Decisions to use resources.

builders of this kind of image were those Spaniards who first saw and came into contact with the new lands and peoples. This original image was modified subsequently to fit the nature and character of the new information which was made available by the increased number of Spaniards who visited the New World and communicated to their compatriots their impressions, opinions and ideas on the new lands and peoples. As individuals and subgroups of a society may hold world views which, in relative terms, can differ appreciably from the world view which is generally accepted by the society at large and as, at the same time, this latter world view is itself nothing other than the result of a composite of individual world views which differ marginally from each other, it is easy to see how there could exist more than one image of the new lands and people displaying popularity among early sixteenth century Spaniards. These images existed at variance, and sometimes in competition, with each other and were subject to a continuous process of change and modification. In time, one image could yield to the increasing popularity of another, or they could both amalgamate, engendering a new image.

In the same way that the world view of the early sixteenth century Spaniard guided his perception and evaluation of the New World environment, so too the image he was carrying in his mind of the nature of these lands and people -- itself a result of a world view and a series of perceptions -- would influence the perception and evaluation of the environment and the interpretation of human and natural resources. It is important to realize that, while the perception of the unfamiliar milieu of the New World was screened in harmony with the particular values and attitudes of the early sixteenth century

Spaniards, in its turn, the image of the New World milieu which they were carrying in their minds influenced this perception. Divergence between the perceived environment and the image would result in a modification of the image to adjust to the perceived reality. The decisions to use as resources certain elements of the human and natural environment were based on the nature of this final image.

The whole process which we have been describing is represented schematically on the model reproduced in Figure 4, with the arrows indicating the direction of the main flow of influence. The application of this model to the situation we have set forth to study is a flexible and tentative one. The complexity of the problem makes it impossible to examine every aspect of the development which the Spanish image of the New World underwent during the first thirty to fifty years of the sixteenth century. In spite of this, the theoretical framework presented in the model is of great help, for through it we can easily visualize the close integration which exists among the processes of perception, image formation and behavior.

In the final analysis, the behavior of the early sixteenth century Spaniards in the New World was guided by their value system. It is to this value system that we will next turn our attention, trying to identify those basic components which bear significantly upon their perception of the New World environment and the interpretation of its resources.

NOTES

[1] Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environment Perception, Attitudes and Values*; Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice Hall Inc., 1974, p. 4.

[2] Kevin R. Cox, *Man, Location and Behavior: An Introduction to Human Geography*; New York, John Wiley and Sons Inc., 1972, p. 101.

[3] The Ojibwa Indians of the Lake Winnipeg, for example, see cannibal monsters known as "windigos". (Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study ...*, p. 60).

[4] A. Irving Hallowell, *Culture and Experience*; New York, Schoken Books, 1967, p. 258.

[5] Yi-Fu Tuan, Topophilia: A Study ..., p. 61.

[6] Ibidem, p. 4.

[7] Ibidem, p. 4.

[8] Kenneth Boulding, *The Image: Knowledge in Life and Society*; Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 1956.

[9] Ibidem above, pp. 5-6.

[10] Ibidem above, pp. 3-5.

[11] This division responds to the "designative" and "appraisive" types of perception (see p. 8).

[12] Kenneth Boulding, *The Image: Knowledge ...*, p. 73.

[13] Linguistic patterns do not irrevocably imprison the senses, but rather, Hoijer judges, direct perception and thinking into certain habitual channels. ("Science and Linguistics" in Language, Thought and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf; John B. Carroll ed., New York, Wiley, 1956, p. 213).

[14] Friedrich Weissman, "Analytic-Synthetic", Analysis, vol. 13, 1952, p. 2.

[15] Edmundo O'Gorman, The Invention of America: An Inquiry Into the Historical Nature of the New World and the Meaning of Its History, Bloomington, Indiana, Indiana University Press, 1961, p. 41.

[16] Ibidem, p. 51, note 1.

[17] Roger M. Downs, "Geographic Space Perception: Past Approaches and Future Prospects", in Progress in Geography, International Reviews of Current Research, vol. 2, pp. 84-85.

[18] Harold C. Brookfield, "On the Environment as Perceived", in Progress in Geography, International Reviews of Current Research, vol. 1 p. 64.

PART I

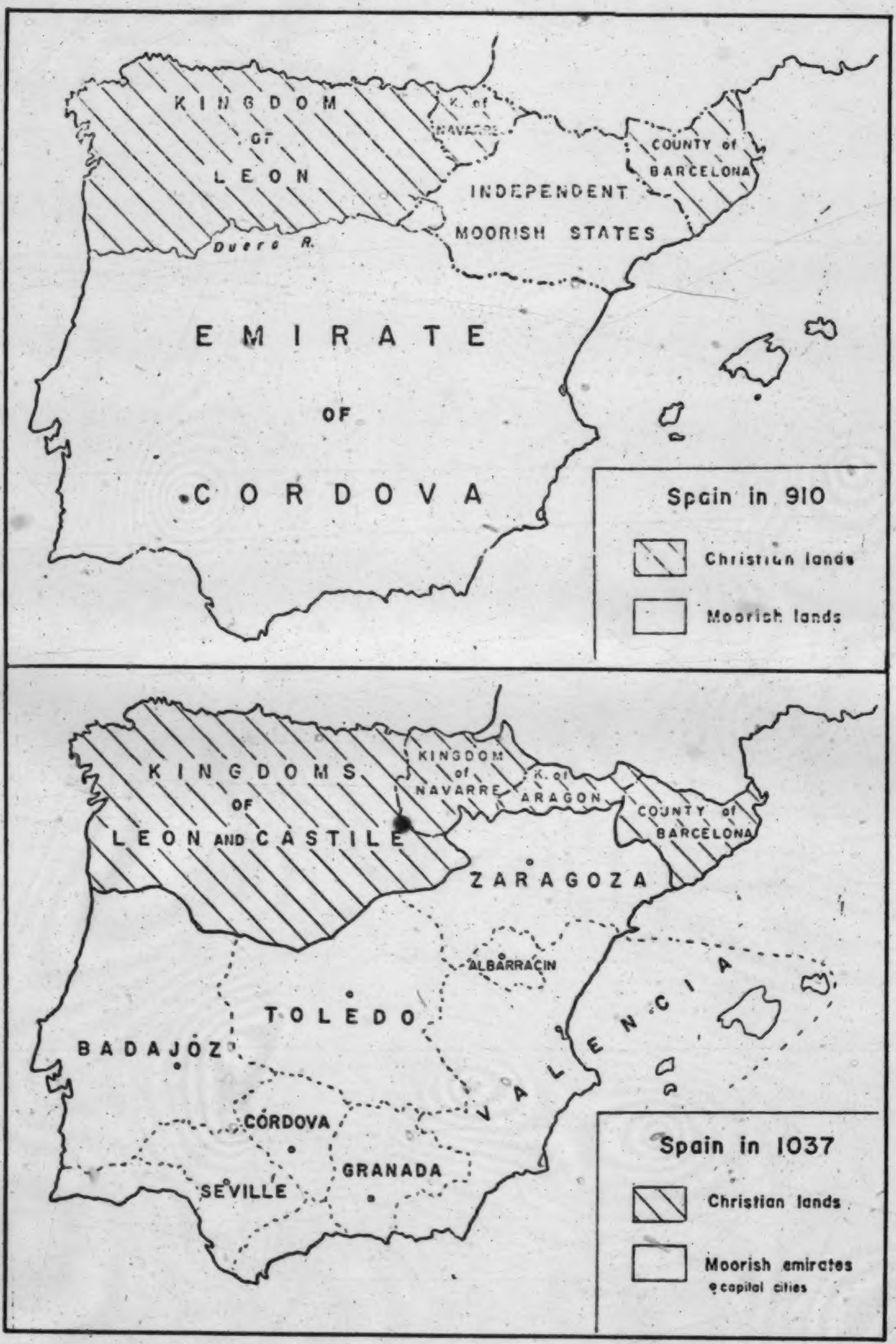
THE VALUE SYSTEM OF THE EARLY SIXTEENTH CENTURY SPANIARD

CHAPTER II

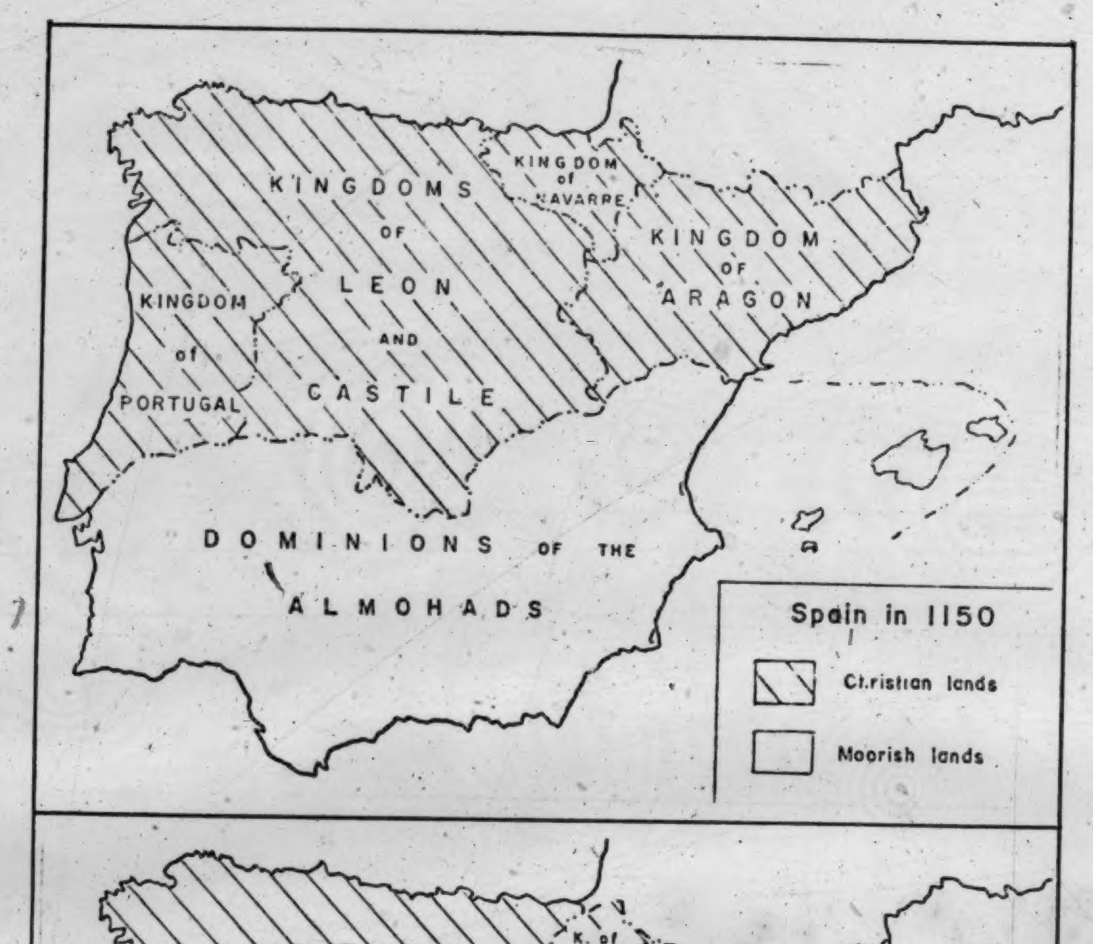
THE HISTORICAL ~~CIRCUMSTANCE AND THE~~ ROLE IT PLAYED IN THE FORMATION OF THE VALUE SYSTEM OF THE EARLY SIXTEENTH CENTURY SPANIARD

The modern Spanish philosopher Ortega y Gasset has restated the classic viewpoint that a man is born at a certain time, and formed by a definite tradition, and that his social and cultural environment is determined by historical circumstances. The cultural characteristics of any people have been developed through slow accretions resulting from trial and error attempts of the group to find ways of adjusting to its environment. The principal function of culture -- as has already been mentioned -- is the purely utilitarian one of enabling the group to survive. Each trait has -- or once had, since some traits tend to persist long after changing circumstances have made them unnecessary -- some relationship to other traits and some relevance to the environment in which the particular group happens to live. When people move, their cultures go with them. And if one wishes to know the "why" of their behavior, he must look to the old environment as well as the new; one must consider the historical circumstances in which the people have been immersed.

The question posed here is this: how has sixteenth century Spanish society and personality been influenced by historical circumstances, and what personal value systems, outlook on life and vital attitudes have developed as a consequence?[1] Americo Castro has demonstrated[2] that, to answer these questions, it is not necessary to go back into the history of Spain further than the eighth century, the


KINGDOM OF LEON
K. of NAVARRE
COUNTY of BARCELONA
INDEPENDENT MOORISH STATES
Duero R.
EMIRATE OF CORDOVA
Spain in 910
Christian lands
Moorish lands
KINGDOMS OF LEON AND CASTILE
KINGDOM of NAVARRE
K. of ARAGON
COUNTY of BARCELONA
ZARAGOZA
ALBARRACIN
TOLEDO
BADAJOZ
VALENCIA
CORDOVA
SEVILLE
GRANADA
Spain in 1037
Christian lands
Moorish emirates
• capital cities

Figures 5 & 6. Source: J.F. Ramsey, Spain: The Rise of the First World Power


KINGDOMS OF LEON AND CASTILE
KINGDOM of NAVARRE
KINGDOM OF ARAGON
KINGDOM of PORTUGAL
DOMINIONS OF THE ALMOHADS
Spain in 1150
Christian lands
Moorish lands
KINGDOM OF CASTILE AND LEON
K. of NAVARRE
KINGDOM OF ARAGON
KINGDOM OF PORTUGAL
KINGDOM OF GRANADA
Spain 1212-1492
Christian lands
Moorish until 1492

Figures 7 & 8. Source: J.F. Ramsey, Spain: The Rise of the First World Power time of the Moorish invasion of the Iberian Peninsula. The Moors entered Iberia in 711 and it took only a few years (711 to 718 A.D.) to overrun the entire peninsula. The reconquest took nearly eight centuries, and throughout the entire time one or another part of the country was under the powerful influence of Moslem laws, religion, customs, ideas and way of living.[3] During this period, a complicated system of fighting and coexistence developed between the two groups. The reconquest ended in 1492 with the expulsion of the Moor from his last stronghold in the Kingdom of Granada. It was the period between 718 and 1474, the date of marriage of Queen Isabel and King Ferdinand, that saw both the unification of the Spanish Kingdom and -- more important for our special concerns -- the formation of the Spanish character and personality.[4]

The Moorish invasion, which took most of its expansive force from religious motives, also gave the Christians a religious motive for fighting back, in addition to the natural desire to reconquer the land from which they had been driven. The religious basis thus gave the warfare a much more tenacious and fanatical spirit. A system of caste, determined by religion, developed gradually in the peninsula, based on whether one was Moorish, Jewish or Christian.[5] Each of these three castes was interested in maintaining and improving its standing in relation to the other two.

According to the caste system that evolved, social functions were differentiated, depending on the castes that carried them out. The tailor (alfayete), the barber (alfajeme), the muleteer (arriero), the mason (albanil), the architect (alarife), the inspector of weights and measures (almotacen), and the shoemaker (zapatero) were Moors.

The tax gatherer (almojarife), the physician, the pharmacist, the veterinarian (albéitar), the tradesman, the astrologer, the interpreter (truchimán), among others, were Jews. The Christian played a more circumscribed role in such activities. His goal was to be a nobleman or a priest callings that, once attained or taken up, were regarded beyond the power of renunciation or cancellation. Victimized by nobles, ecclesiastics and Jews, the shapeless mass of the Christian commoners was left outside this framework, in a state of perpetual restlessness produced by the longing of its constituents to move up to the nobility, through military enterprise, or to the priesthood, and thus become members of the ruling caste of lords.[6]

The Christians realized, and accepted, the respective occupational monopolies of Mohammedans and Jews, while remaining conscious of their superior position, for they, and not the Jews and Moors, were the lords of the land. The Christian thought himself superior because he believed in the only "true" religion, and because he did what the Moorish commoner neither knew how to nor could do: that is, to fight with the "valor of the Christian" and win. The Christians were united among themselves in their estimation of the worth of their caste; they felt themselves superior to the other castes because the king and nobles were Christians and ruled over Jews and Moors. Their religious faith and their loyalty to the monarch were the interpretation and the sign of this belief.[7]

In summary, within the Christian caste personal worth was based on the mere fact of being Christian. From the fifteenth century on they started worrying greatly about having "pure blood". Because there was no physical type of a racial "Spanish man", purity of blood was identified with the consciousness of caste, of descending from the people whom early sixteenth century Spaniards came to identify also with the elect of God in the Hebrew fashion.[8] Even the Christian peasant or the person of low class felt himself to be part of the master caste if he had pure blood.

Spanish fifteenth century society was a society of castes and not of classes. The consequences of this fact are extremely important. A social class bases its rank primarily on its ability to govern and the amount of its wealth; the rank of the caste, on the other hand, depends on the mere existence of the person. Spanish social life would differ markedly from the social life of other European countries where a caste system did not develop, and where there arose a graduated and well integrated feudal regime with a uniform social hierarchy organized into classes of laborers, artisans, nobles and clergy. In contrast, Spanish society was divided into three different hierarchies each independent of the others, and therein lies the explanation for the absence in Spain of a feudal society.[9] The Christians, forming the majority of the country's population, would not look for some productive activity of a sedentary character -- as his European neighbors did -- but rather escaped into the field of military adventure, where they would not find themselves dominated by, and in competition with, the members of the other castes, and where, with luck, they would gain dominion and authority over them.

The Christian had not felt the need of becoming involved in the study of nature or in the management of things because these abilities were not required for the great task of conquering the land and ruling a state -- his all-consuming ambition. The professions, trades and occupations, were the province of the French monks and immigrants, the Genoese shipbuilders, the Moorish builders of houses and fortresses, and the Jews, who knew the trades, who could cure ailments, who knew how to collect money to buy the things needed by the kings, the lords, the clerics.[10]

The individual of the Christian caste showed a disdain for activities of a mechanical or commercial nature, including any intellectual activities cultivated by the other castes. Commerce was thought of as an activity of the other castes, beneath the dignity of the Christian, and the same was thought of all mechanical and manual activities. The production of wealth did not become an index of value for the Christian caste, which scorned those, the Jew and to a lesser degree the Moor, who built up fortunes and accumulated capital.

A study of the psychology and character of the Christian does not serve to explain the views on life he adopted. The world view of the Hispano-Christians came into being through a slow process of simultaneous adoption and rejection of a number of alternatives in adaptive strategy that were offered to them by the conditions of the human and natural environment in which they lived. In the long period of coexistence with, and struggle against the Moors, the Christians found that, more than other alternatives, personal courage with little equipment other than faith, was validated as a way of life. As success slowly followed success, the Christians became more and more confirmed in this belief. In the Christian view, the weaponry, craftsmanship and science of the Moors, as well as their disciplined and industrious society, counted for little, or else they would not have been defeated;

so these properties were scorned by the Christians; an alternative to their way of life was discarded. At the end of the struggle, the Christians possessed complete military superiority over the Moors. As the Moors were being subjugated, they were incorporated into Christian society as the servants who would do the manual work, while the Christians became more and more a military oriented caste.

With success over the Moslems, it then became more worthy to be a Romance-speaking, valorous, self-reliant Christian of the Iberian peninsula. In this way the Christians started to become aware of a new dimension in their collective lives. They had acquired a set of experienced possibilities for their collective life -- possibilities of expanding the ways of being and doing that which in the the process of being done had acquired value -- and impossibilities (or reluctances) -- the impossibility of being and doing what had not been done in the achievement of success or of being and doing as the enemy did.[11] It was these sets of experienced possibilities and impossibilities that modelled and shaped the frame of mind, the world view and the value system of the Hispano-Christian.

Vital Attitudes and World View of the Early Sixteenth Century Spaniard

As we have seen, the world view of the Hispano-Christian was formed by a constellation of experienced possibilities and impossibilities. These in their turn were embodied in a configuration of attitudes and dispositions towards the world and life. The whole formed a structure whose units were closely interrelated with each other. As a consequence of this relationship, it becomes very difficult to study the individual units of this structural system in isolation. The study of one of them immediately leads to the consideration of the others. In the discussion which will follow, this fact will appear evident. In it all we have done is to analyse separately different manifestations of the same phenomenon. The significance of this is that, although our concern is with the sixteenth century Spaniard, frequent references will be made to the world view and vital attitudes of his predecessors.

Americo Castro has shown that the vital attitudes which were to characterize the sixteenth century Spaniard and influence the course of Spanish history had their origin in the Kingdom of Castile, the "dynamic center" from which modern Spain would evolve. The Castilians -- as we will have occasion to see -- were the first among the Hispano-Christians to become aware of their own values, and the ones who communicated their ideals to other Spaniards. The fact that, under Charles I, the language of Castile became imperial gives proof of the influence that Castile exerted. In the section which follows, we shall study, in some detail, the particular nature and character of the world view and vital attitudes of the Castilians.

NOTES

[1] The word "vital" as used here does not mean "important". It is used in the strict etymological sense "of, or pertaining to life". And by "life" we do not refer to "biological or temporal life", but to the spiritual reality of man as distinguished from his physical existence.

[2] See for example his book The Spaniards: An Introduction to Their History; Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, University of California Press, 1971.

[3] See Figures nos. 5, 6, 7, 8 for the extent of the territories occupied by the respective groups of Christians and Moors at different historical periods.

[4] See Américo Castro, Los españoles: como llegaron a serlo; Madrid, Ediciones Taurus, 1965.

[5] The word "caste" in Spain was not used in the Hindu sense, even though later the Portuguese applied it to the castes of India. In a caste system the place of the individual is much more clearly defined by his place in the caste than it is by his own family prestige and wealth.

[6] Américo Castro, The Spaniards: An Introduction to Their History, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, University of California Press, 1971, p. 80.

[7] Ibidem, pp. 66, 35, 307.

[8] Ibidem, p. 68.

[9] Américo Castro, The Structure of Spanish History; Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1954, p. 607.

[10] Ibidem, p. 83.

[11] Edmund L. King, "Américo Castro and the Theory and Practice of History", in Collected Studies in Honor of Americo Castro's Eightieth Year; M.P. Hornik ed., Lincombe Lodge, Boars Hill, Oxford, England, 1965, p. 270.

CHAPTER III

AWARENESS OF ONE'S PERSONAL WORTH AND FEELING OF SUPERIORITY

As has been pointed out, the Christian warrior emerged from the struggle of the Reconquista with a degree of self-assurance that he did not possess when the struggle started. This feeling of self-assurance was based on an awareness of the qualities of the individual and his valorous deeds. The faith in the power of the individual to overcome all kinds of obstacles became more and more absolute as the reconquest progressed, and soon this faith began to be identified with the special qualities of character of the Hispano-Christian warrior.

In the twelfth century a book, Historia Silense[1], states that the long-drawn-out war against the advancing force of the Saracens could be waged only by the hardened Knights of Spain, not by the self-indulgent peers of Charlemagne who retired from Saragossa -- longing to refresh themselves in the baths of Aachen.[2]

As the Castilians were those who had fought against the Moors to the greatest extent, it follows that they were also the ones who, among the other Spaniards, became increasingly convinced of an inherent self-superiority and placed more imperious esteem upon themselves. Castro tells us that the Castilian of the first centuries after the reconquest was the only one who posed the problem of his very existence as a Castilian per se. The others -- Navarrese, Leonese, Aragonese and Catalans -- also fought to survive and subsist and extend their territories. The Castilian did all this as well and, in addition, he adorned his existence with the awareness of his own personality.[3] Around 1250, the existence of this type of awareness among the people of the Peninsula, and especially among the Castilians, is reflected in the following verse of The Poem of Fernán González:

> com ella es mejor de las sus vezindades,
> assi sodes mejores cuantos aqui morades;
> omnes sodes sesudos, mesura heredades. . .
> Pero de toda España, Castiella es mejor,
> porque fue de los otros el comienco mayor,
> guardando e temiendo siempre a su señor;
> quiso acrecentarla assi el Criador.[4]

Which translates to mean:

> as she is better than her neighbors,
> thus you who live here are also superior;
> you are sensible, wise and prudent,
> qualities you inherited. . .
> But Castile is the best in all Spain,
> because in former times it had most glorious
> beginnings,
> and has always respected and feared its lord;
> thus did the Creator ordain it to grow
> and multiply.

If the Castilian, and with him the other Spaniards, had a strong and sustained belief in the primacy and excellencies of their persons, soon this belief, and the attitudes it determined, would have repercussions on their perceptions of the surrounding world. We have here a case in which an image of one's self would contribute to the creation of a new image, the nature and character of which would not only accord with, but even give substance to, and extol, the already existing self-image. By 1289, we have a Spain which did not disparage her virtuous inhabitants for, as it is said in the Chronicle of King Alphonse the Learned:

> Spain is abundant in grainfields, pleasurable in fruits, vicious in fish, tasty in milk and in all the other things that she produces; filled with deer, covered with cattle, lush with horses, benefitted

> with mules, protected by and supplied with castles, merry with her good wines, happy with abundant bread; rich in such metals as lead, tin, mercury, iron, silver, gold; rich in precious stones, in all kind of marbles, in salt -- which is found both on the seashore and in the interior -- and in many kinds of mines; sweet in honey and sugar, lighted with wax, provided with oil, cheerful with saffron. . . .
>
> Spain over all other nations is ingenious, daring, expert in battle, prompt in her zealous endeavour, loyal to the master, settled in the habit of studying, courtly in her speech, endowed with all kind of virtues; there is no land in the world that can compare with her and she has no equal in the number of fortresses; few lands in the world are larger than her. Spain is above all lands in her grandeur and surpasses them all in loyalty. Oh Spain! there is neither tongue nor wit to describe your qualities.[5]

In this curious intermingling of natural and human qualities which Spain is said to possess, we cannot help noticing the important role played by the personal virtues of the individual in attributing grandeur to Spain and making her superior to, and even larger than, the other countries. This current would gain continually in strength. Soon the virtue immanent to the individual became everything and only secondary attention was given to the material elements -- the sources of wealth, as they would later be called -- which surrounded the individual. This attitude is exemplified by Don Alonso de Cartagena, Bishop of Burgos[6], who in 1434 wrote a famous discourse delivered by the Castilian envoy at the Council of Basel justifying the precedence of Castile with respect to England. His words -- in the opinion of A. Castro -- were an overflow of Hispanic awareness, and the preferences and contempt expressed in them are the very ones that were characteristically Spanish at the time and for long afterwards:

> Spaniards are not wont to prize great wealth, but rather, virtue; nor do they measure a man's honor by the store of his money, but rather by

> the quality of his beautiful deeds; wherefore riches are not to be argued in this matter (as the English argued them); for if we should mete out the precedences according to riches, Cosimo de Medici, or some other very rich merchant mayhap would come before some duke. . . .

Against the Castilians, the English argued that their own land was richer and more productive, and to this the Bishop answered:

> I did not wish to argue the abundance of the land, because it seemed to me a base argument and far removed from our purpose, for it is not of peasants but of very noble kings that we are speaking; honor comes not from the abundance of the field but from the virtue of man.

It was not easy for Don Alonso de Cartagena to descend to the plane of material things, but since the English wish it, he adduces:

> . . . the vineyards and olive groves, of which there is a great abundance in the Kingdom of Castile, the which have been exiled forever from the Kingdom of England. . . And all nations know the esteem that, amongst all the things that belong to the abundance of the earth, is enjoyed by wine and olive oil. If they should speak of those skilled in the making of cloths, I would perhaps grant them something, for there are in our land no weavers who can make cloth so fine as London scarlet; but even that product that we call grana (Kermes dye), from which the scarlet receives the sweetness of its odor and the flame of its color, has its birth in the Kingdom of Castile, whence it is carried to England. . . I might speak of metals, but in my judgement such a base and earthly argument is not proper to such an exalted subject.

In the last analysis, riches are something secondary, a possession that: ". . . abets in the exercise of virtue, but they are not to be adduced as a principal thing." In any event Castile is rich, perhaps in excess, since some fear lest "such an abundance of riches as there is today in Castile may do some harm to virtue."[7]

Twenty years later Fernando de la Torre[8] addressed a confidential paper to Henry IV of Castile, when the latter was getting ready to inaugurate his reign.[9] A. Castro has studied this paper and he concludes that the thesis expounded in it by Fernando de la Torre is that Castile (which to all intents and purposes was already Spain) possessed two supreme values: a provident and extremely fertile land, and a magnificent courage in warfare. But the value of Castile lay primarily in what it humanly was, and not nearly so much in what it produced with the labor of its people, as Fernando de la Torre explains:

> The vanity of the Castilians, intensified by their pride, and by the superabundance of their land, leads them to delight in luxuries and ostentation, and therefore they do not refrain from using the products manufactured in other lands out of Castilian raw materials.

And, trying to justify the Spaniards' lack of technical skill, he concludes:

> From where does this emanate and proceed save from the fertility of Castilian land and, in other kingdoms, from want. This want, the people know how, by their labors, to convert into wealth and income; and in Castile the fatness of the land causes them, in a certain fashion, to be proud and slothful and not so ingenious and industrious.[10]

Fernando de la Torre's thesis is especially interesting because his point of view on the subject differs in an important respect from those which were expressed before him. Like the unknown author of the Crónica General de España, as well as Don Alonso de Cartagena, he endows the Castilian individual and his homeland with many good qualities. However, the virtues conferred upon the former are not absolute, for he, in fact, notes that the Castilians are proud, full of vanity and delighting in unnecessary luxuries and ostentations. In this he gives proof of a critical attitude which was absent in his predecessors. Fernando de la Torre has dared to question for a moment the validity of the image of the virtuous Spanish individual rising above his neighbors. We say "for a moment" because, by explaining the noted deficiencies in the character of his compatriots as a result of the "fatness" of the land, he is already absolving them from any serious personal responsibility.

The Spaniards, as a result of historical circumstances, had created an image which portrayed their persons and character in a highly favorable way. This image, in its turn, by influencing the perception of the surrounding environment and by projecting itself into other images, brought about a view of the land and natural resources of Spain which, rather than correspond with reality, fitted well with the view the Spaniards had of themselves. The image that portrayed Spain as a country abundant in riches of every kind was the one that Fernando de la Torre used to excuse the deficiencies that his inquiring mind had found in the behavior and character of his compatriots. In so doing, any need to change an image was avoided, an image which, if modified, would have brought about changes and alterations in other images of the world view. What Fernando de la Torre had done was to incorporate his new insight or perception into the generally accepted world view by relating it to, and making it discreetly fit, the pre-existing images. This process explains why the basic nature of certain images and world views can remain unaffected for long periods of time, and in this way acquire a character of permanence and stability.

The image portraying Spaniards and Spain as paragons of virtue and natural wealth, respectively, would persist in the minds of the inhabitants of the Peninsula in spite of the hard reality of everyday life and the harsh world that surrounded them. The fourteenth century heard repeated lamentations of the Cortes (Parliament) over the poverty of the Castilian land: "The earth is very sterile and very poor" (1307); "The land was very poor and needy of attention and depopulated" (1367); "Our kingdoms are very needy " (1388).[11] Bartolomé de las Casas tells us that in Castile, during the reign of the Catholic Monarchs, "there existed great poverty and the Kings of Spain were lacking in wealth and abundance."[12] The modern economist and historian Jaime Vicens Vives, who has studied the agricultural production in Castile during the reign of the Catholic Monarchs, has found an uninterrupted series of insufficient harvests from 1502 to 1508, and intermittently bad harvests in the years before (those of 1486 and 1491 were especially bad).[13] All of this was in a kingdom where the percentage of population involved in agricultural production was very high.[14] Natural conditions, such as adverse climatic circumstances and soil infertility, do not serve to explain the backward state of Castilian agriculture. The reasons have to be found elsewhere, as we will have occasion to see in Chapter IV of this study. But by now the paradoxical aspect of the situation with which we are concerned has already become apparent. On the one hand the Spaniards see their land as rich, fertile and abundant in all kind of products while, on the other, the people whose livelihood depends upon the products of this "fertile" land find themselves in a state of deprivation and need. Nevertheless, what an outside observer can see as a clear contradiction was not perceived as such by the Spaniards of the period, who continued to believe in a land prolific and abundant. Since the beginning of the sixteenth century, in fact, the Spaniards became more entrenched than ever in this belief and, basing themselves on some of the texts written by Roman historians or on any other kind of evidence that they could find to fit their purposes, contended that Spain not only was, but always had been since remote antiquity, a land of milk and honey, abounding in every imaginable richness. Together with this they continued to see themselves as men who surpassed all others in virtue and qualities of character. We will review in passing a small sample of the many expounders of these views.

Martín Fernández de Enciso, in his Suma de Geografía (printed in 1519) brings to the attention of the reader the fact that "Spain, since remote antiquity, was thought to be the richest and most fortunate country of Europe."[15] Among the different provinces of Spain this author considers Andalusia to be:

> the most fertile province of all Spain, and when placed in the universe of all things, the most fertile in the world, because, although there are other provinces that are fertile in the production of many things and in the production of some of the things necessary for the support of human life, yet they are lacking in others; but this province of Andalusia is fertile in the production of all things necessary for life.

He then proceeds to list some of the products that give renown to Andalusia: "abundance of silk and of fine quality wool, flax, hemp, fresh and dried fruits; all kind of livestock and the best horses in the world."[16]

Around 1522 Diego López de Zúñiga, a Spanish humanist, vigorously defended Spain against what he had interpreted, in some of the writings of Erasmus, as offensive remarks directed against his fellow Spaniards:

> Erasmus, through his words, reveals his jealousy of the Spaniards[17], a race intellectually superior (to the other races of northern Europe) by reason of his Roman origins. Spain is a fertile country, exuberant in all those products which are necessary for life; she is a powerful country, holding the first place among the others for her military courage. It is true that for several centuries she has been diverted from intellectual pursuits owing to her incessant fight against the enemies of the Faith. But this is now over and universities are rising everywhere; in them the students crowd and humanism is honored.[18]

Some ten years later Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, writing in the first part of his Historia general y natural de las Indias did not hesitate in having recourse to Plinius to demonstrate that, in ancient times, the mines of Spain were, in all probability, much more productive than those which had been found and exploited in the known sections of the Indies and the island of Española (Haiti). "Even today" -- Oviedo continues --

> Spain has many mines of silver from which this metal is extracted in large quantities. Besides these, Spain possesses mines of iron and steel (sic), and dyestuffs and alum[19] and resistant marbles and alabaster, from which all great treasures are obtained.

Owing to these and other sources of natural wealth that are enumerated, Oviedo thinks Spain is "one of the richest countries that there is in the world", and that to top all this wealth "God has granted her an additional possession in the riches of our Indies."[20]

In a work entitled Libro de grandezas y cosas memorables de España, published in 1548, Pedro de Medina, its author, sees Spain as the

> region which is head of all the other regions of the world and where they begin. . . , because, if we examine the different parts of Europe, Africa, Asia, the Indies and even the lands of the New World we

> have now discovered, we realize that none of them shows itself so clearly head and beginning of all the entire world as does Spain. And this can be exemplified as well by actual evidence: From her, as head and principal part, great benefits and universal goods are continually emanating and being distributed to all the other regions.[21]

There are in Spain twenty things which Medina considers especially worthy of mention:

> natural wealth, especially the mines of silver; bread, wine, livestock, fish, oil, all kind of fruits, medicinal herbs; flowers of the more varied species; iron and steel; silk; wools; horses; ports; science; justice; saintliness; miracles; faith. Faith that in Spain is so true and rooted that immediately after the Holy Gospel was preached, there has never failed to be plenty of persons willing to confess Jesus Christ with works and words in all the nations of the world. And always this faith has remained in her perfectly rooted and will always remain so.[22]

From this description it is apparent that, in Pedro de Medina's mind, the true and unshakeable faith of the people of the Peninsula was the greatest asset Spain could muster. It is not without a certain air of indifference that he later calls the reader's attention to the fact that "as many historians and some author-cosmographers have written and as is shown clearly enough, all the soils of Spain are formed by a mixture of metals and precious stones."[23]

With respect to the personal qualities of the Spaniards, Medina affirms that:

> they excel all the other nations in valor and in the arts of war; also in the strength and swiftness of their bodies as well as in fortitude of spirit and in the endurance of many labors, hunger, and other hardships; aside from this they surpass the other nations in the wise and excellent advice that her good captains know how to give; and also they surpass them in virtue, and customs, and good manners. Finally, the intrepid spirit of the Spaniards is such that they have accomplished things which seemed

> impossible (as those astounding navigational feats in the ocean and the widespread preaching of the gospel in the Indies) . . . Out of which it becomes clear that in divine as well as in human affairs God has given advantage to the Spaniards over all the nations of the world.[24]

Even Bartolomé de las Casas -- who was a critical and severe judge of the actions and character of the Spaniards -- after introducing us to texts quoted from Ptolemy and his commentator-interpreter Haly, concludes that:

> Spain, Italy and great part of Greece, are the lands which up until now have been recognized as the most fit and suitable to beget and procreate men of perfect bodies and intelligence. . . . England, Flanders, Germany, Denmark, Norway and other lands in their vicinity for the most part raise and produce men of heavier build and strength and more aggressiveness than is found in our men; but our land has everything, for it raises the men of proper build and appropriate strength and aggressiveness and quickest intelligence.[25]

And the humanist Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, recognized as one of the best trained minds of his era, is of the opinion that:

> There are few nations more wise, excellent, just and religious than Spain. . . . The Spaniards excel among other people in their cleverness, fortitude, humanity, wisdom, religion, valor, frugality, temperance, moderation and magnanimity.[26]

Parallel to the belief in the superior qualities of the Spanish people was another belief which attributed to the Spanish nation a glorious future. Spain had been destined to subjugate and dominate the Islamic world, to rule over other countries and to build a great empire. Messianism flourished wildly during the times of the Catholic Monarchs. There existed among the people a general belief in the superhuman mission that God had assigned to these monarchs. Queen Isabella dreamed of a great African empire.[27] The Spanish people had a clear awareness that an imperial "mission" had fallen upon them. In 1492 in the preface of his Gramática castellana, the first ever written, its author Antonio de Nebrija remarked that "always language was the companion of empire" and dedicated the work to Queen Isabella.[28]

The Spain of Charles V inherited an absolute aspiration still more impressive: to bring the whole planet into the fold of a theocratic faith.[29] As the Romancero[30] reads:

ganadas las tres Armenias,
Arabia no ha de dejar,
Egipto, Siria, las Indias,
todos se le han de dar.
Agareños, ismaelitas,
tambien ha de conquistar,
mas dichoso que Alexandre
por la tierra y por la mar.
A todos en un aprisco
el los tiene de encerrar;
los sacrementos son pastos
con que los ha de pastar.[31]

Which translates to:

the three Armenias defeated,
Arabia will not be spared,
Egypt, Syria, the Indies,
all will be subdued.
Muslims, Ismaelites,
will also be conquered,
more fortunate than Alexander
on both land and sea.
To all in a sheepfold
will he lock;
the sacraments are the pastures
with which he will graze them.

And, as is reconfirmed by Oviedo: "This monarchy (the Habsburg monarchy represented by the Emperor Charles) shall go on and on forever until the last day and end of the world, and all the other kings and kingdoms will be inferior and subordinate to it."[32]

The time had come for:

La edad gloriosa en que promete el cielo
una grey y un pastor solo en el mundo.

(The glorious age in which heaven promised
one flock and a single shepherd in the world.)

And all the Spanish people lived in the expectation of the hegemony that was expressed in the verse:

Un monarca, un imperio y una espada.

(Only one Monarch, one Empire and one Sword.)[33]

Such "democentric" attitudes provide evidence that the people who felt them and formulated them had a strong sense of their own value and superiority. There is no doubt that the Spaniard of the first half of the sixteenth century believed himself superior to other Europeans. He was equally aware of his own personal worth as well as the great destinies which he was sure God had assigned to the Spanish nation. In 1535 the humanist Michael Servetus, a Spanish convert living in the Netherlands, praised the empire-building drive of his compatriots and noted that they had "fertile brains, grand aspirations, and scanty knowledge."[34]

The "scanty knowledge" of the Spaniards Michael Servetus refers to was the result of their lack of interest in learning and accumulating knowledge, common to people who, as we will have occasion to see in the next chapter, were, above all, interested in "upholding one's honor".

NOTES

[1] The so-called *Historia Silense* is a history of Spain written about 1118, probably in León, by an anonymous monk.

[2] Ramón Menéndez Pidal, *The Spaniards in Their History*; London, Hollis and Carter, 1950, p. 129.

[3] Américo Castro, *The Spaniards. . ., p*. 516.

[4] Stanzas 156-157, ibidem.

[5] *Crónica General de España*, put together under Alphonse X the Learned (1221-1284) and continued under Sancho IV in 1289. The paragraphs above are transcribed in Pedro Corominas, *El sentimiento de la riqueza en Castilla*, Madrid, Ediciones Aguilar, 1951, p. 311. They give proof that, by the thirteenth century, the Castillians had begun to identify themselves as Spaniards "par excellence" and were developing a strong sense of nationality.

[6] Don Alonso de Cartagena (1385-1456) was, like his father Don Pablo de Santa María, Bishop of Burgos. Both father and son had been converted from Judaism. Don Alsonso was considered one of the most learned and able men of Spain in his time. (*Spanish Life in the Late Middle Ages*; Collection of readings selected and translated by Kenneth R. Scholbert, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1965, Studies in Romance Language and Literature, n. 57, p. 11).

[7] Discourse Pronounced by Don Alonso de Cartagena at the Council of Basel Concerning the Right of Precedence of the King of Castile Over the King of England; In the journal *La Ciudad de Dios*, 1894, XXXV, pp. 122-542. The above excerpts are transcribed in A. Castro, *The Spaniards. . .* , pp. 150-152.

[8] Like Don Alonso de Cartagena, Fernando de la Torre probably belonged also to the class of new Christians. Like the former he became a bishop.

[9] See the *Cancionero y obras en prosa de Fernando de la Torre*, Dresden, A. Paz y Milia ed., 1907.

[10] In A. Castro, The Spaniards. . . , pp. 153-155.

[11] Quoted by Ramón Carande in Anuario de la historia del derecho, II, 1925, p. 267. Transcribed by A. Castro, The Spaniards. . , p. 227.

[12] "yet" -- Bartolomé de las Casas adds -- "in spite of this poverty they did not fail to accomplish great deeds, inside as well as outside Spain." (Historia de las Indias, Book II, Chapter VI).

[13] Jaime Vicens Vives, "The Economy of Ferdinand and Isabella", in Spain in the Fifteenth Century, London, Roger Highfield ed., Macmillan Press, 1972, p. 263.

[14] John Lynch states that, for the period under examination, roughly 95% of the Spaniards lived in the country and were peasants. (John Lynch, Spain Under the Habsburgs, Oxford, B. Blackwell, 1964, 2 vols., vol I, p. 13). This figure, however, is highly misleading for in it no distinction is made between the hidalgos who lived in the country and did not work the land, and those men who could more properly be considered as "peasants" or "villanos". For 1541 the same author estimates that Castile had a population of 540,000 hidalgos and 3,923,000 commoners. (Ibidem, p. 44).

[15] Martín Fernández de Enciso, Suma de Geografía; Madrid, Colección de joyas bibliográficas, 1948, p. 74.

[16] Ibidem, p. 66.

[17] Erasmus of Rotterdam was not, in any sense, jealous of the Spaniards. He had never felt strong attraction towards Spain and he repeatedly refused the invitations of his influential Spanish friends and admirers at the court of Charles V to come and settle there. Erasmus saw in Spain a strange country, semiticized, filled with Jews and without true Christianity. (Marcel Bataillon, Erasmo y España; Mexico City, Fondo de cultura económica de Mexico, 1950, p. 77).

[18] Marcel Bataillon, ibidem, p. 93.

[19] A whitish, transparent mineral salt used in dyeing, tanning skins and medicine.

[20] Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés, Historia general y natural de las Indias, Book 6, Chapter 8.

[21] Pedro de Medina, Libro de grandezas y cosas memorables de España; Madrid, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Colección clásicos españoles, 1944; Chapter 1.

[22] Pedro de Medina, Libro de . . . , Chapter 26.

[23] Pedro de Medina, Libro de . . . , Chapter 133.

[24] Pedro de Medina, Libro de . . . , Chapter 25.

[25] Historia de las Indias, Book III, Chapter XXX.

[26] Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, Demócrates segundo; Translated into Spanish and edited by Angel Losada, Madrid, Francisco de Vitoria, 1951, pp. 82 and 33.

[27] John Fraser Ramsey, Spain: The Rise of the First World Power; The University of Alabama Press, 1973, p. 235.

[28] Ibidem, p. 240.

[29] A Castro, The Spaniards. . . , p. 86, and the author adds: "thus motivated she displayed an arrogance not exceeded by the British in the XIXth century, or by the Americans in the XXth."

[30] A collection of ballads generally epic in character that the people of the time used to memorize.

[31] This text was written before 1539. Reproduced in A. Castro, De la edad conflictiva, Madrid, Taurus, 1963, p. 76.

[32] Historia general. . . , Book 33, Chapter 55.

[33] Marcel Bataillon, Erasmo y España, pp. 227-228.

[34] A. Castro, The Spaniards. . . , p. 165.

CHAPTER IV

SPIRIT OF HIDALGUIA AND NOBLE DISTINCTION: SEARCH FOR HONOR AND WILL OF SEIGNEURY

> In the heart of all Spaniards lives a great quality; the desire for honor and praise.
> (Peter Martyr, Eight Decade, Book 6)

The Hispano-Christian's faith, in his limitless capacity as an individual to overcome all manner of obstacles, had become so predominant that, in the opinion of A. Castro: "even religious belief seemed at times to be subordinated to it, to the imperious will of the Christian, to the purpose of maintaining oneself in an exalted position, superior to everything else."[1] And it was in the sixteenth century that this concern with the personal worth, valor and self-esteem of the individual, according to the same writer, "absorbed the Spaniard's entire scale of values, outlook and capacity for judgment."[2]

The apparent degree of significance acquired by personal worth and self-esteem in the life of the Christian arose as a result of the Reconquest and the long period of co-existence and mutual interactions between three different groups of people. Semitic influences, that is to say, both Arabic and Hebraic influences, played a decisive role in the formation of these attitudes. Islam values highly all that exists, beginning with man, because he is the work of God. This led to the valuing of man for the sake of what God already had put into him. As a consequence, to expect everything from divine mercy because one feels himself to be the "son of God" and to evaluate oneself intensely, became Spanish traits which were further strengthened by the contact with the

Jews. The latter considered themselves God"s "chosen people" and were imbued by a strong feeling of being superior to both Christians and Moors.[3] This feeling of superiority was accompanied by concern with the "purity of lineage" or "purity of blood" which helped the Hispano-Hebrews to maintain themselves as a caste apart.[4] The basis of the semitic idea of lineage was the belief that the body was worth more than the works accomplished by the person, because biological descent took precedence over those very works.[5] Associated with it was the prestige enjoyed in Jewish society by the "bene-tovim", i.e. "sons of wealth or of good people", which formed an institution among the Jews, a noble class to which the Talmud alludes.[6] This filial manner of designating the condition of a person was of semitic origin; it existed as well among the Arabic people for whom the phrase "awlad ni'mati" has a meaning implying "rich people" and, by inference, those of good family.[7]

The concern with lineage and purity of blood made a great impact on the Christian mind. The Castilian expression "fijos d'algo" or "hijos de bien" ("children of wealthy or noble origin") was translated from the Hebrew "bene-tovim". If during the fifteenth century and prior Christians (especially members of the aristocratic families) had mixed with Jews without considering the crossing of blood an abomination, by the end of this same century, the Christians, who by then had fully assimilated the preoccupation with the purity of lineage, considered it infamous to mix with Hispano-Hebrews and Hispano-Moors. This trend accelerated in the following decades in such a way that around 1554 Oviedo could say:

> It is true that among all the Christian nations there is none where it is better known than in Spain, who are the nobles and who the people of pure caste and who those of suspicious beliefs; all this remains hidden in the other nations.[9]

In the feeling of lineage was inherent a preoccupation with the family name and a desire on the part of the individual to prove his own worth and to enhance that name. In the Hispano-Christian these concerns manifested themselves in his endeavor to "mantener la honra" (to uphold one's honor) and "ganar honra" (to gain honor).[10] To gain honor was the same as to secure for one's self and his family social recognition which was obtained when the individual possessed distinction, excellency, power and prestige. Next we shall review some of the evidence which serves to indicate the extent to which the concern with honor dominated the life of the Spaniards.

In the tenth century, the Castilian Count Fernán González, holding a council with his followers in which was to be decided whether battle should be waged against the far more numerous hosts of the enemy, rebutted the arguments advanced by a knight who opposed military engagement with the following argument:

> The reply to this (that battle should not be waged) is that, as man cannot elude death or escape from it, he must try to die with as much honor as possible. . . . And, by engaging and winning a battle, I will gain much honor and all you still more, and you will make of me the best man of Spain.[11]

Five centuries later we can find evidence demonstrating the fact that, on occasions, the French refused to fight the troops of the Spanish captain Fernández de Córdoba because, as they said: "Those mad Spaniards value a little honor more than a thousand lives and are incapable of enjoying this life."[12]

The Spanish Knight of the late Middle Ages aspired, as Don Juan Manuel[13] did, to win the guerdon of fame, for then mankind would say of him: "The man died but not his name" ("murió el hombre, mas no el nombre"). This later became an heraldic motto: "Muera el hombre y viva el nombre" ("let the man die, but the name survive").[14]

In the panegyrical biography of Pero Niño (1378-1453), Count of Buelna, written by the chronicler Gutiérrez Díez de Games (1446-?), we note the following advice given to Pero Niño by his educator:

> My son, take heed that you are of great lineage, and that the wheel of the world, which is never still nor lets things stay in good estate, brought down your very honored line, and made the great small and the lofty poor and low. You must struggle and work to return to that state, and even surpass in grandeur and nobility those from whom you are descended; for it is nothing wonderful for a man to resemble his father in maintaining that estate that he was left, for he found it already earned, but it is very praiseworthy of him to exceed all those from whom he comes and gain greater dignity.[15]

And an old family motto which clearly indicates the strong feeling of lineage that existed among the Spaniards reads as follows:

> Antes que Dios fuera Dios
> y los peñascos peñascos,
> los Quirós eran Quirós
> y los Velascos, Velascos.[16]

That is, the Quirós-Velasco family proclaimed to believe itself older (and nobler by implication) than the oldest rocks and even God.

Finally, Pedro de Medina in his Libro de la verdad offers us insight into the nature of the "earthly aspirations" of a sixteenth century Spaniard when he has one of the characters of his book declare:

> I said that I thought of myself as fortunate, for I am a gentleman of illustrious lineage. The origin of my ancestors is very generous. My fathers and grandfathers mustered continually great nobility and

> were well known everywhere. Hence I come from pure, noble and illustrious blood.
>
> I said that I feel very happy for I have in my house a great multitude of stewards, servants and slaves to obey me, and so I have many who are attentive to the wishes of my will. All of them serve me and obey me and execute whatever I ask them to do. And in all this I hold myself as a man of fortune.
>
> I said that I receive great satisfaction in the fact that there are continually guests sitting at my table, with whom I laugh and enjoy myself. I prepare for them great banquets with abundant and sophisticated food; which makes them greatly praise me for my generosity and hold me in high regard for my liberal temperament. And I consider this of great merit.
>
> I said that I esteem it as a great benefit the fact that I am well known by everyone. I maintain relations and conversations with many. My fame is everywhere. Many are familiar with my deeds and name. So it is that praise to my name has extended over the world. For this reason I consider myself a man of fortune.[17]

The necessity for playing a role in society, for being well-known and famed, was inherent in the Spanish condition. The concept of "honra" implies the respect that one is owed and receives from others as a recognition of one's virtue, deeds of valor, generosity, noble actions, prestige and power. The desire for showing one's magnificence and generosity manifested itself in the satisfaction found in surrounding oneself with a multitude of servants and clients. This tendency was already clearly evident in Spanish society by the middle of the fifteenth century. At that time a French viscount with an income of 15,000 crowns had with him only two guardsmen at the siege of Cadillac; and in time of peace he maintained no more than ten attendants, and they and he ate by assignment in the servants' dining room or the hall of the king. Contrasting this with the Spanish state of affairs, Bishop Fernando de la Torre exclaims:

> What knight is there in Castile who with a third of the French viscount's income does not take three times as many guardsmen, and does not ordinarily maintain six times as many people, and does not regard it as degrading for him and his attendants to eat in the dining hall of His Lordship?[18]

In the context of the Reconquest and Crusade against Islam, "honra" and fame could be gained by courageous warfare and the accomplishment of valorous deeds. As Juan de Lucena, notary and counsellor of the Catholic Monarchs, said:

> Listen in a little longer about this military, gentle life. . . . It brings with it divine grace and immortal fame that we mortals most long for; to live without end in the memory of posterity is the greatest of the worldly goods.[19]

To exalt the prestige of one's lineage and so to gain "honor", the sixteenth century Spaniard fought for God and King in the fields of Europe. That their primary intention in joining the military profession was to gain "honor", and not wealth, is clearly confessed by the soldier Cliterio: "I came (to fight in Flanders) not for the sake of material rewards, which are small enough and which I do not need, but to increase my nobility in the exercise of war."[20]

Spanish medieval concepts completely separated riches from nobility. A nobleman was clever and able, powerful and, above all, virtuous. The highest grade of medieval nobility was formed by the "ricos homes" and "ricas hembras", and money did not allow one to belong to this class.[21] But, if money did not open the door, the long period of warfare during the reconquest had offered many individual Spaniards the opportunity to elevate themselves above their condition. The "Poema del Mío Cid" tells us that the chivalry of medieval Spain rested on a broad democratic basis. In practice almost every Christian could become a "caballero" who served in war with a horse, even if he was not an hidalgo. Furthermore, every Hispano-Christian of whatever degree and condition was permeated with a sense of his own dignity as a freeman -- his own nobility as a descendant of the Visigoths. And this fundamental democratic sense instead of suppressing the nobility actually extended it to those below, so that each peasant might become an hidalgo.[22]

John Lynch's statement "the easy success of the nobility created in the whole of Castilian society a pro-aristocratic mentality and gave it its characteristic imprint for centuries to come",[23] tends to be misleading for it confuses causes with effects. It was the pro-aristocratic mentality which existed among the people and which manifested itself in a continual search for honor and distinction, that permitted and directed the development and growth of the Spanish nobility. Commenting about this pro-aristocratic mentality, the Mexican historian José Miranda has said:

> The great value conferred upon the nobility status turned him who had it -- as insignificant as the status possessed might have been --, into its relentless defender, and he who was lacking in it into its most persevering pursuer. . . . All kinds of conceivable calamities will be endured by any common man as long as he might place himself inside the ranks of the nobility. The soldier and the conqueror will ask, as reward for their services, a patent of nobility for, after all, it was as a reward for their deeds in war that the high nobility of Castile had secured the titles of which it was so proud. The peasant and the rich merchant would not dare to go so far, for the kind of services they rendered were not of the kind that could be rewarded with a patent of nobility, however they would do all they could, with the help of the capital they had accumulated, to secure the much coveted titles. . .[24]

This passion for ennoblement was felt most strongly by the hidalgo class which, increased from below, was becoming larger every day. In the figures for the allocation of the subsidy of 1541 in Castile, the hidalgos (who were exempted from the payment of taxes) numbered 108,358 and the pecheros (taxpayers) 784,578. As these figures represented householders, the total might have been 540,000 hidalgos and 3,923,000 commoners.[25] The economic significance of this is that 13% of the people of the kingdom of Castile paid no taxes and generally performed no work of any kind.[26] The alarming economic aspect of this tendency towards knighthood was occasionally attacked by royal decrees (for example, those of John II on December 20, 1442) and also by the Cortes (agreements of the Cortes of Palencia in 1431, those of the Cortes of Ocaña in 1464).[27] But these efforts were in vain. Slowly but constantly the Monarchy was bending to strong pressures coming from the sector of the nobility. The Catholic Monarchs were responsible for having taken three important steps which facilitated the concentration of lands in the hands of the aristocracy:

- they confirmed and extended the right of establishing mayorazgos (Laws of Toro, 1504); that is, the right of hereditary transmission which entailed property to the firstborn of a family,
- they approved of a policy of matrimonial connections whose only result was to produce a concentration of property in the hands of those who already had it, and
- in Granada they carried out a policy favorable to the aristocracy. Granada was a new conquest, but with the exception of the western sections of the kingdom (Ronda, Málaga, Alora, Coín), which were given to peasants and workmen from lower Andalusia, the rest was

turned over to the nobles.[28]

About the year 1500 the nobles owned 97% of the territory of the Península either directly or by jurisdiction. This is the same as saying that 1.5% of the population owned almost the entire territory. Of this 97%, 45% belonged to bishoprics, high ecclesiastics, cathedral chapters, canonries, the urban aristocracy and the knights. The remaining 3% was shared by some four or five million Castilians. As for the country's revenues, one-third belonged to the King, one-third to the nobility, and the other third to the Church, which is like repeating "the aristocracy", for its second sons owned the choicest part of the ecclesiastical perquisites.[29]

However, statistics such as these when incorrectly interpreted, can create a false picture of reality. An important difference exists between owning a territory directly and owning it by jurisdiction. Pedro Corominas, after an examination of various Castilian legal codes (Fuero Real, Fuero de Alvedrío, Fuero de las Fazañas de los Fijosdalgo) and municipal and ecclesiatical charters of the Middle Ages, concludes that territorial property in Castile was fundamentally a collective attribute, although the idea of property was given a connotation of seigneury.[30] Furthermore, as Corominas points out, the Castilian never learned to appreciate the source of wealth represented in the land and, as a consequence, never became attached, much less rooted to it. The Castilians were not interested in the possession of the land, but rather in ruling seigneurially over it. They strived after the fruits of the land, but not the land itself; they did not aspire as much to the possession of a territory as to the dominion over the men who inhabited it.[31] On this score, certain lines from the Poem of Mío Cid (1140) are highly significant:

> Oíd a mí, Albar Fáñez e todos los cavalleros!
> En este castiello grand aver avemos preso;
> los moros yazen muertos, de bivos pocos veo.
> Los moros e las moras vender no los podremos,
> que los descabecemos nada nos ganaremos;
> cojámolos de dentro, ca el senorío tenemos;
> posaremos en sus casas, e dellos nos serviremos.
>
> Hear me, Albar Fáñez and all knights!
> We have taken great wealth in this castle;
> the Moors lie dead; few live ones do I see;
> Moorish men and Moorish maids we cannot sell,
> Nor by chopping off their heads will we gain anything;
> Let us keep them inside, for we have the seigneury;
> We shall dwell in their houses and we shall make use of them.[32]

To exercise seigneury while utilizing the services of the Moors -- such was the conscious program. To the Old Christian of the Reconquest period the riches he could manipulate with his hands were more important than the inanimate land. He aspired to have seigneurial rule over the land because the latter was seen as a means to acquire prestige, wealth and power, but no interest existed in him for direct participation in the development of the natural resources of a piece of territory. In a country where a general desire to rule seigneurially is substituted for genuine attachment to the land, it is to be expected that, sooner or later, most of its territory will fall under the jurisdiction of those who, accompanied by luck, strive more perseveringly in the imposition of their power over others.

The will to dominate, to rule seigneurially, existed not only at the level of the individual, but also at the level of the State. This was to be expected for both rulers and ruled were the products of the same society and the same cultural environment. The aspirations of the ones reflected, in smaller or larger scale, the aspirations of the others. In the fifteenth century the voice of Bishop Don Alonso de

Cartagena is heard proclaiming:

> How much glory for Spain, how much fame for her vassals, how much honor for Spain, if the clergy, religious and seculars, went against Granada and the knights with the king rushed into Africa! This certainly would mean another name for the clergy than that of rich. Greater wealth would there be in accumulating kingdoms than in piling up treasure.[33]

NOTES

[1] A. Castro, The Spaniards. . . , p. 367. The author is also of the opinion that "the hispanic religion is a personalized belief, not a guide for conduct; but the hispanic man is capable of killing and being killed in the defense of "his" religion, of that world of his in which reigns his will, his dream and his caprice." (ibidem, p. 292).

[2] Ibidem, p. 573.

[3] The feeling of superiority felt by the Castilian Jews must have been indeed very great. They went so far as to consider themselves as of "better lineage" and "nobler blood" than the non-Spanish Jews. It is interesting to notice that this feeling of superiority persists still today among the Jews of Spanish diaspora, the Sephardic Jews. (See A. Castro, The Spaniards. . . , pp. 73 and ff.).

[4] In the phrase "purity of blood" the blood does not refer to anything physical. The concept "purity of blood" expressed the consciousness of having an unadulterated past in respect to the faith of being the descendants of God's selected people. The blood acted as a transmitter of the purity of spirit. The preoccupation with the spiritual purity of blood was related to the Biblical belief in the transmission, through the blood, of the parents' sins. (See A. Castro, De la edad conflictiva, p. 205).

[5] A. Castro, The Spaniards. . . , p. 581.

[6] A. Castro, The Spaniards. . . , p. 269.

[7] A. Castro, The Spaniards. . . , p. 271.

[8] A. Castro, The Spaniards. . . , p. 138.

[9] Fernández de Oviedo, Quincagenas de la Nobleza de España, 1880 edition, p. 281. Transcribed in A. Castro, De la edad conflictiva, p. 71.

[10] A distinction exists in Spanish between the concepts of "honra" and "honor". In the concept of "honor" there is inherent the notion of something ideal and objective. "Honra", on the other hand, is in the ownership of someone who, from the boundaries of his existence, is experiencing honor. "Honor" then, exists outside and independent of the individual; "honra" is the individual's experience of honor. (For more detail see T. Garcia-Sabell, "Concepto y vivencia", in Collected Studies in Honor of Americo Castro. . . , pp. 110 and ff.).

[11] Primera Crónica General de España; Madrid, Nueva Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, 1906, vol. I, p. 392. Transcribed by Pedro Corominas, p. 102.

[12] Ramón Menéndez Pidal, The Spaniards in Their History, London, Hollis and Carter, 1950, p. 140.

[13] The Infante Don Juan Manuel was the grandson of King Ferdinand III, the most powerful noble in Castile and author of the book of exemplary tales, El Conde Lucanor, written about 1350.

[14] Ramón Menéndez Pidal, op. cit.

[15] "Victorial by the chronicle Guitiérrez Díez de Games"; a panegyrical biography of Pero Niño, Count of Buelna, in Spanish Life in the Middle Ages, pp. 78-79.

[16] Transcribed in Guillermo Céspedes de Castillo, Latin America: The Early Years; New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1974, p. 57.

[17] Pedro de Medina, Libro de la verdad (first published in 1555); Madrid, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, Colección clásicos españoles, 1944. See dialogues 8, 18, 25 and 30; on pages 282, 294, 303 and 309, respectively.

[18] Transcribed in A. Castro, The Structure of Spanish History, p. 21.

[19] Opúsculos literarios de los siglos XIV al XVI; Madrid, Bibliófilos españoles, 19, 1892, p. 134. Transcribed in Rafael Lapesa, "Sobre Juan de Lucena", in Collected Studies in Honor of A. Castro. . . , p. 278.

[20] The Spanish sentence goes: "habiendo venido sin necesidad de tan poco interés. . . por me augmentar en nobleza a la guerra". Diego Núñez Alva, Diálogos de la vida del soldado; Madrid, Libros de Antaño, 1890. The author, a Spanish soldier in the service of the Emperor Charles, wrote this work about 1547.

[21] Alfonso García Valdecasas, El hidalgo y el honor; Madrid, Revista de Occidente, 1958, p. 71.

[22] A. Pastor, "Essay on the Chivalry of Spain", in Chivalry; London, E. Prestage ed., Kegan Paul-Trench-Trubner, 1928, p. 117.

[23] John Lynch, Spain Under the Habsburgs, p. 15.

[24] José Miranda, España y Nueva España en la época de Felipe II; Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, publicaciones del Instituto de historia, n. 1, 1962, p. 45-47.

[25] John Lynch, Spain Under the Habsburgs, p. 44.

[26] If we take into account the numerous members of the regular and secular clergy, also exempt from taxation, the total percentage of people paying tribute would appear to be much smaller.

[27] Luis Suárez Fernández, "The Kingdom of Castile in the Fifteenth Century", in Spain in the Fifteenth Century, R. Highfield ed., p. 106.

[28] Jaime Vicens Vives, "The Economy of Ferdinand and Isabella", in Spain in the Fifteenth Century, R. Highfield, ed., p. 254.

[29] Ibidem, p. 253-254.

[30] Pedro Corominas, El sentimiento de la riqueza en Castilla, p. 222.

[31] Ibidem, p. 118.

[32] Stanzas 116-117. Transcribed in A. Castro, The Spaniards. . , p. 215.

[33] Opúsculos literarios de los siglos XIV al XVI, p. 166. Transcribed by Rafael Lapesa, "Sobre Juan de Lucena", in Collected Studies in Honor of A. Castro. . . , p. 277.

CHAPTER V

CONTEMPT FOR MANUAL LABOR

In Chapter I of this study it was pointed out that, during the Reconquest, the Castilian became convinced that only the practice of war and the exercise of authority were valuable activities; only by practicing these activities could honor be gained. The existence of the Hispano-Christian began to center more and more on the "impossibility" of working at tasks which were deemed dishonorable. Great value was attached to personal courage and little to mechanical activities and intellectual pursuits.

To what degree manual labor was abhorred by the Christian caste is brought clearly into relief in a passage of a book by Rodrigo Sánchez de Arévalo, Spaeculum Vitae, published around 1450, in which a father advises his son as follows:

> My son, keep firmly in your mind the dictum of the ancients that it is not fitting for a wise man and one who competes for honor, glory or virtue, to make use of the mechanical arts and to take pleasure in activities which are low and servile. . . . It is with good reason that these arts and the like are called "mechanical" because "mechan", [that is, soil the person] do not better one's understanding, nor do they prepare you for following the course of virtue.

And Guiciardini, an Italian visitor to the Court of the Catholic Monarchs, comments: "They (the Spaniards) do not stand out in any mechanical or liberal art. Nearly all the craftsmen at the court of the King are French and other nationalities."[2]

The sixteenth century Spanish humanist Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, a well-travelled man and knowledgeable of the customs of other countries, confirms the opinion expressed by Guiciardini when he declares:

> In our times we can see that there exists in the main cities (of Europe) a neglect of the military profession and a general absence of interest in the arms; instead, the people are concerned in the first place with commerce and family affairs. In this way many become rich and succeed in accumulating immense fortunes. Meanwhile, there is scarcity of strong and courageous men and, without resorting to mercenary troops, it is impossible to make war or to carry it on once it has been started. Very different from all this is what takes place in many parts of Spain, and especially in our city of Cordoba, where no notice is taken of commerce and it is considered the greatest distinction to excel in arms.[3]

Of the same opinion as Sepúlveda was the historian Oviedo, who states:

> A rare thing and precious gift of Nature is the very great courage and endeavor that exists among the Spaniards, and no other nation is better endowed in these qualities than Spain. Because in Italy, France and the other kingdoms of the world, only the nobles, knights and the individuals of warlike disposition are especially or naturally experienced in the use of arms, while among the rest of the people, and among all those who are employed in mechanical arts and in agriculture, and among the common people, few are the ones that engage in the art of war. In our Spanish nation, on the other hand, it seems as if all its men were born principally and particularly dedicated to the military profession and the use of arms, and they find the art of war so fitting to them that all the rest seems accessory and willingly they divest themselves of everything to engage in this art.[4]

During the Middle Ages Spanish trade, commerce and manufacturing were mainly the activities of Jews and Moors. The administration of finances, on the other hand, was almost exclusively in the hands of the former. Vicens Vives notes the fact that after the end of the fourteenth century the role of the Jews as usurers and financiers declined all over Western Europe with the only notable exception of Castile where, on the contrary, their influence grew daily to the point that they obtained control over most of the money in circulation. That this could happen is explained by Vives as a result of the incapacity of the Castilian bourgeoisie (that is, the Castilian bourgeoisie of Old Christians) for creating banks and banking deposits. But, more important, Vives notes the immoderate desire for luxury and ostentation which characterized Castilian society and was one of its chief vices. The nobility, the clergy and the bourgeoisie ruined themselves because of their desire to dazzle others with jewels, clothing and ornaments. "The raison d'etre of the financial power of Jews and conversos (converted Jews)" -- Vives concludes -- "was that they alone were the ones who understood the value of money in Castile."[5]

After 1492 -- the year of the expulsion or forced conversion of the Jews -- much trade, commerce and financing was still done by conversos but, as the urge to prove the respectability of one's blood became more urgent, they were in great part substituted by Italians, Germans,[6] English and French merchants who, by the middle of the sixteenth century, were already playing the leading part in Spanish economic enterprise.[7]

The important role played by the Genoese in the economic life of sixteenth century Spain is striking. By the middle of this century there were twenty Genoese merchant houses operating in Spain, while only five or six could be classified as genuinely Castilian. Moreover, there was a lack of staying power in the Spanish firms which can be seen in the career of the Ruiz family. Simón Ruiz (probably a convert), the initiator, was a successful and enterprising businessman who began his commercial activities in 1550 as an importer of Breton linens. The second generation of his descendants dissipated the wealth created by the first, and sought to abandon business for nobility.[8] And this desire for a more "honorable" life was contagious: Those among the Genoese who lived permanently in Seville -- where they were numerous and had formed a colony -- tended to become integrated into the Spanish community and to adopt the Spanish social system of values. With few exceptions their children turned away from trade and entered the service of church and state. By the third generation, the commercial background of the family was forgotten and it then could be considered as completely hispanized.[9]

The Moors and Moriscos[10], as we have already seen, were occupied as small traders, artisans and muleteers. They were also industrious and excellent farmers. Their craftsmanship and their taste for agricultural activities (love of trees, of all the products of the land) had a religious basis. The individual did not become unworthy because his ancestors were manual laborers. Doing manual tasks well was a moral duty much emphasized by the laws and ordinances with regard to good conduct in the practice of arts and crafts.[11] The results of this work ethic became quickly apparent. The Arab kingdom of Granada was, during the fifteenth century, rich, prosperous and fertile. It had a dense and industrious population,[12] agriculture was prosperous, workshops were active, and a very remunerative trade was carried on with Africa. Granada exported wheat, grapes, fruit, sugar, dyestuffs and silk; manufactured goods, among which were velvets, damasks, and gold jewelry; and minerals such as gold, silver and lead.[13] But thirty-four years after Granada was taken from the Moors in 1492 the picture had drastically changed. At this time, the Venetian ambassador Andrea Navajero, in a visit to Granada, commented:

> Hidden among them (the waters, fruits, trees, woods) are the farms of the Moors, many in ruins, for the Moorish population is diminishing and it is they who keep everything in order; the Spaniards here, as in other parts of Spain, are not very industrious and do not cultivate or sow the land with good will; they like to go to the war or to the Indies and make their fortune in this way, rather than in any other.[14]

The Venetian ambassador was right. The Spaniards -- in marked contrast with the Moors who felt a deep love for the land and a taste for agriculture activities -- were not interested in the cultivation of the land. Peasants were held in high contempt by the Castilian hidalguia (hidalgo class), and proof of this were the words pronounced by Mío Cid at the Oath of Santa Gadea:

> Villanos te maten Alonso - villanos que no hidalgos
> de las Asturias de Oviedo - que no sean castellanos;
> Mátente con aguijadas - no con lanzas ni con dardos,
> con cuchillos cachicuernos - no con punales dorados.
> ....
> si no dijeres la verdad - de lo que te fuere preguntado.[15]
>
> May you be killed by villains, Alonso - by villians and
>   not hidalgos
> from the Asturies and Oviedo - they shall not be Castilians;
> May they kill you with goads - not with spears and darts,
> with horn-handled knives - not with golden daggers.
> ....
> if you do not answer the truth - to what you will be asked.

In the mind of the minstrel author of these verses, the Castilians are identified as hidalgos "par excellence" while the Asturians, because more ostensibly dedicated to agricultural activities, are stamped with the attribute of coarse villainy. Further evidence of the contempt in which peasants were held in Castilian society is produced by the Cortes of Palencia which, in 1431, decreed that neither peasants nor commoners could be appointed as representatives.[16]

Manual labor was not accorded legal status in Spain until the reign of Charles III (1759-1788) in the course of an invasion of rationalist ideas from foreign lands. The decree of 1783, which in Spain has been called the "most revolutionary measure of the century", stipulated that individuals entering business or industry did not lose thereby their title to hidalguía, or their eligibility for municipal employment, as they had before.[17]

If farming as well as finances, trade, commerce and manufacturing were activities with which the hidalgo was not concerned, what were the courses of action open to him? The Spanish sixteenth century saying "Church, or sea, or royal service" gives an answer to this question. Another contemporary commentary runs similarly: "(There are) six Spanish adventurers: One goes to the Indies, another to Italy, another to Flanders, another is engaged in lawsuits, another is in prison, and another is taking religious vows. And in Spain there are no other kind of people save these six mentioned."[18]

NOTES

[1] A. Castro, Aspectos del vivir hispánico: Espiritualísmo, mesianismo, actitud personal en los siglos XIV al XVI; Santiago de Chile, Cruz del Sur, 1949, p. 165-177.

[2] Viaje, Libros de Antaño, VIII, p. 199. Transcribed in A. Castro, ibidem, p. 166.

[3] Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, De Appetenda Gloria; Madrid, 1780, p. 167. Transcribed in A. Castro, ibidem, p. 167.

[4] Fernández de Oviedo, Historia general. . ., Book 15, Chapter 7.

[5] Jaime Vicens Vives, "The Economies of Catalonia and Castile", in

Spain in the Fifteenth Century, p. 51.

[6] The Germans in Spain dealt mainly in mining and milling. The Fuggers were given the administration of the mercury mines of Almadén and the silver mines of Guadalcanal in southern Spain, as well as the property of the military orders; the latter concession meant that vast grain lands, pastures, tolls and peasant dues were placed under foreign control, to exercise which the Fuggers introduced their own agents, German, methodical and zealous. (See J. Lynch, Spain Under the Habsburgs, p. 131.)

[7] J. Fraser Ramsey, Spain: The Rise of the First World Power, . 83.

[8] J. Lynch, Spain Under the Habsburgs . . . , p. 106.

[9] Ruth Pike, "The Genoese in Seville at the Opening of the New World", Journal of Economic History, vol. 22, n. 3, September 1962, p. 351.

[10] Moriscos was the name the Christians gave to the Moors who remained in the Peninsula after the Reconquest was completed.

[11] A. Castro, The Spaniards. . . , p. 242.

[12] The population numbered about 600,000 people.

[13] Vicens Vives, "The Economies of Catalonia and Castile", in Spain in the Fifteenth Century, p. 248. The Moslems are responsible for the introduction into Spain of rice, sugarcane and cotton, oranges and lemons, thus changing the distinctive character of Mediterranean agriculture from its reliance on olives and wines. They also introduced paper manufacturing and it was their handicraft that produced the great steel blades of Toledo, the leather of Córdoba, and heavy silks that rivaled those of Byzantium.

[14] Viaje por España del magnífico Micer Andrea Navajero, embajador de Venecia al Emperador Carlos V; translated from the Italian by Antonio Fabié; Madrid, Libros de Antaño, n. 8, 1889, p. 296.

[15] Transcribed in Pedro Corominas, El sentimiento de la riqueza en Castilla, p. 235.

[16] Luis Suárez Fernández, "The Kingdom of Castile in the Fifteenth Century", in Spain in the Fifteenth Century, p. 95.

[17] Sakari Sariola, Power and Resistance: The Colonial Heritage of Latin America; Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1972, p. 216.

[18] Such is the title of the book said to have been written in the middle of the sixteenth century by an eccentric named Vasco Díaz Tanco de Frenegal. See B.J. Gallardo, Ensayo de una biblioteca española de libros raros, II, p. 784.

PART II

THE EMIGRANTS TO THE INDIES

CHAPTER VI

THE EARLY SIXTEENTH CENTURY SPANISH EMIGRANTS TO THE INDIES

Sixteenth century Spain was not a culturally homogeneous country -- if such a country can ever exist -- but rather consisted of a series of regional nuclei -- the Castiles, Aragon, Catalonia, Galicia, Extremadura, Andalusia among others (see Figure 9) -- each with cultural characteristics of its own, which sometimes went so far as to manifest themselves in different languages (see Figure 10).

In the past it was assumed that the majority of the Spaniards who embarked for the Indies in the first decades of the sixteenth century came from the southern regions. Today it is known that significant numbers of colonists came from other parts of Spain, not only the towns in Extremadura and Andalusia (see Figures 11 and 12). The voluminous records kept on passengers officially licensed to emigrate demonstrate also that men from all walks of life descended upon America.[1] Oviedo was well aware of the cultural differences that existed among the emigrants to the Indies when he points out that: "not all the vassals of the Crown of Spain are of like customs and similar languages".[2] This being the case, must it be assumed that the world view and vital attitudes of the sixteenth century Spaniards who came to the Indies varied according to social background and regional origin? There is no doubt that, at a close level of analysis, variations can be found to exist in the world view, and vital attitudes of individuals with similar cultural background. However, at the more general level at which our analysis is being conducted, it can be said that, fundamentally, and once allowance is made of significant,

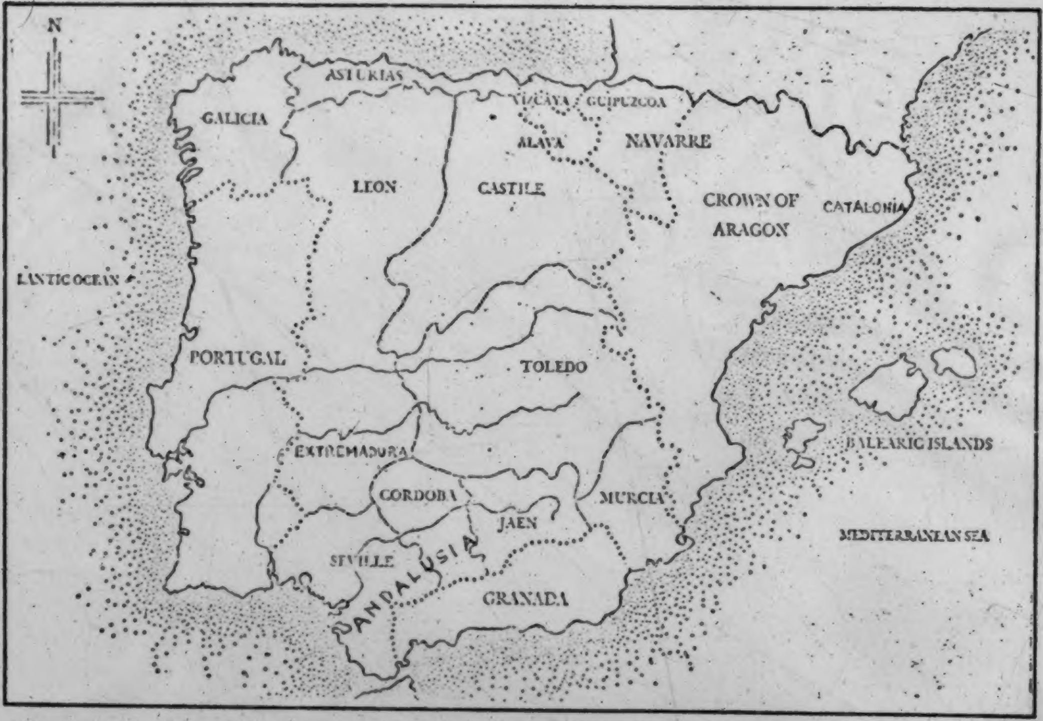

N
ASTURIAS
VIZCAYA
GUIPUZCOA
GALICIA
ALAVA
NAVARRE
LEON
CASTILE
CROWN OF ARAGON
CATALONIA
LANTIC OCEAN
PORTUGAL
TOLEDO
BALEARIC ISLANDS
EXTREMADURA
CORDOBA
MURCIA
JAEN
SEVILLE
ANDALUSIA
GRANADA
MEDITERRANEAN SEA

Figure 9. The Kingdoms of the Crown of Castile in the XV Century.
Source: R. Highfield, Spain in the XV Century.

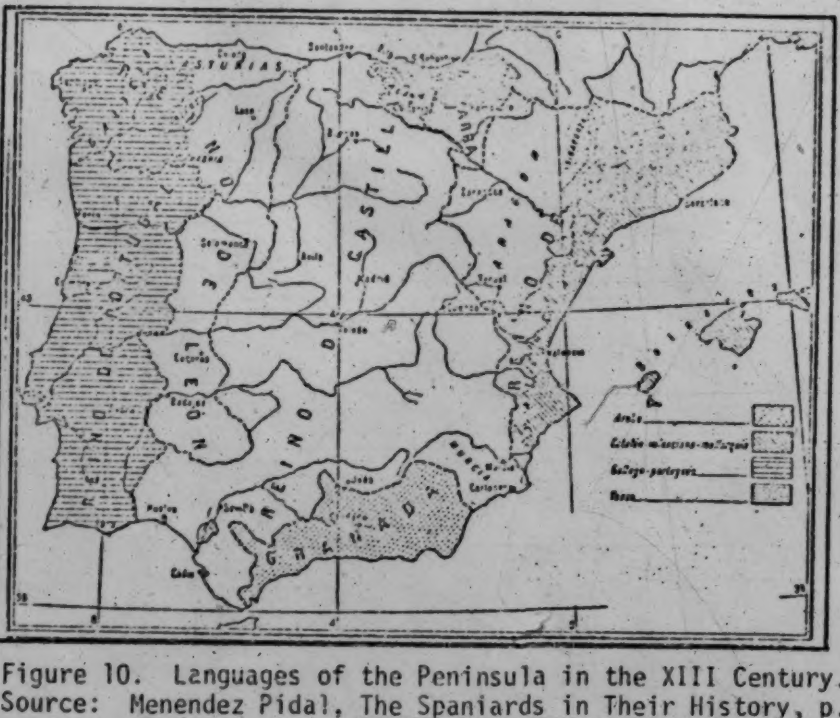
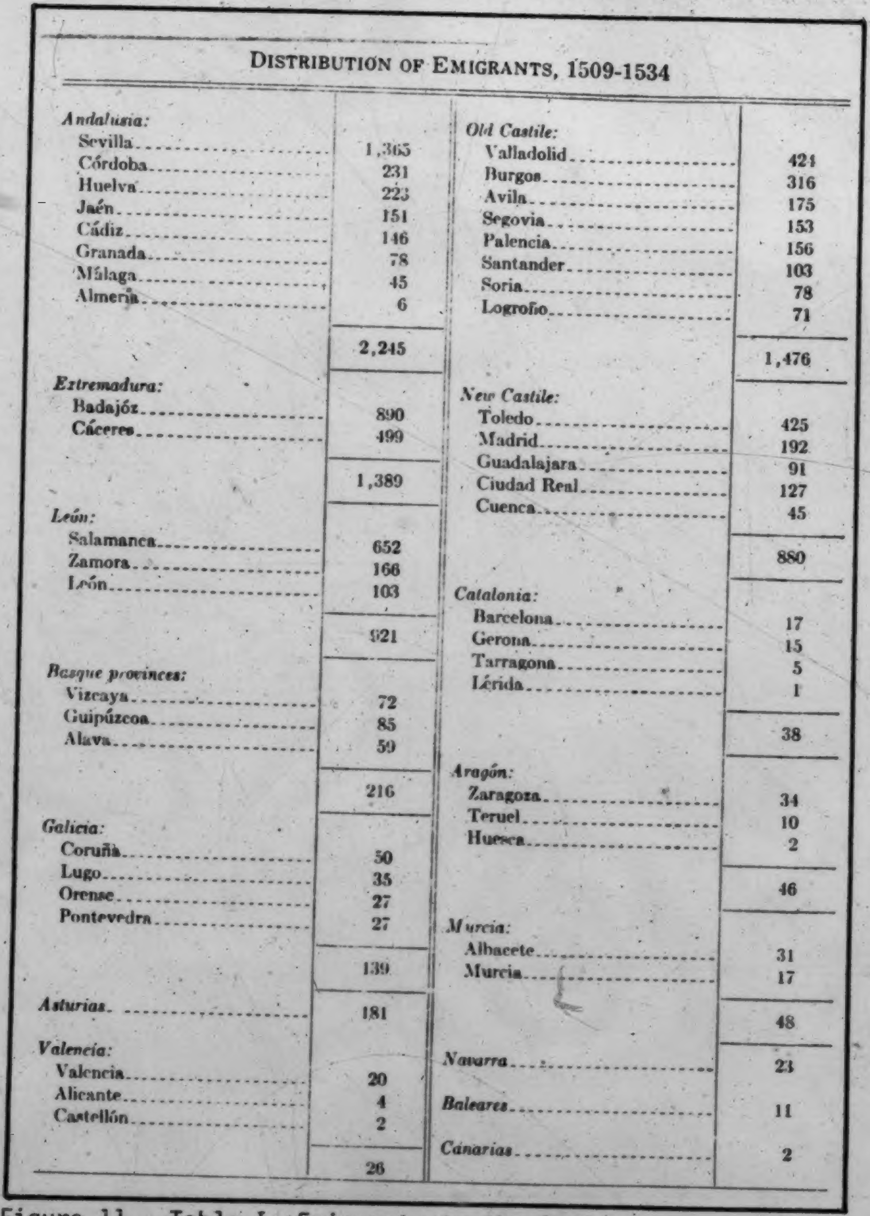

ASTURIAS
CASTILLA
LEON
REINO DE
GRANADA

Figure 10. Languages of the Peninsula in the XIII Century.
Source: Menendez Pidal, The Spaniards in Their History, p. 249.



DISTRIBUTION OF EMIGRANTS, 1509-1534

Andalusia:	
Sevilla	1,365
Córdoba	231
Huelva	223
Jaén	151
Cádiz	146
Granada	78
Málaga	45
Almería	6
	2,245
Extremadura:	
Badajóz	890
Cáceres	499
	1,389
León:	
Salamanca	652
Zamora	166
León	103
	921
Basque provinces:	
Vizcaya	72
Guipúzcoa	85
Alava	59
	216
Galicia:	
Coruña	50
Lugo	35
Orense	27
Pontevedra	27
	139
Asturias	181
Valencia:	
Valencia	20
Alicante	4
Castellón	2
	26
Old Castile:	
Valladolid	424
Burgos	316
Avila	175
Segovia	153
Palencia	156
Santander	103
Soria	78
Logroño	71
	1,476
New Castile:	
Toledo	425
Madrid	192
Guadalajara	91
Ciudad Real	127
Cuenca	45
	880
Catalonia:	
Barcelona	17
Gerona	15
Tarragona	5
Lérida	1
	38
Aragón:	
Zaragoza	34
Teruel	10
Huesca	2
	46
Murcia:	
Albacete	31
Murcia	17
	48
Navarra	23
Baleares	11
Canarias	2

Figure 11. Table I: Emigrants to the Indies by provinces 1509-1534
Source: G. Foster, Culture and Conquest, p. 31

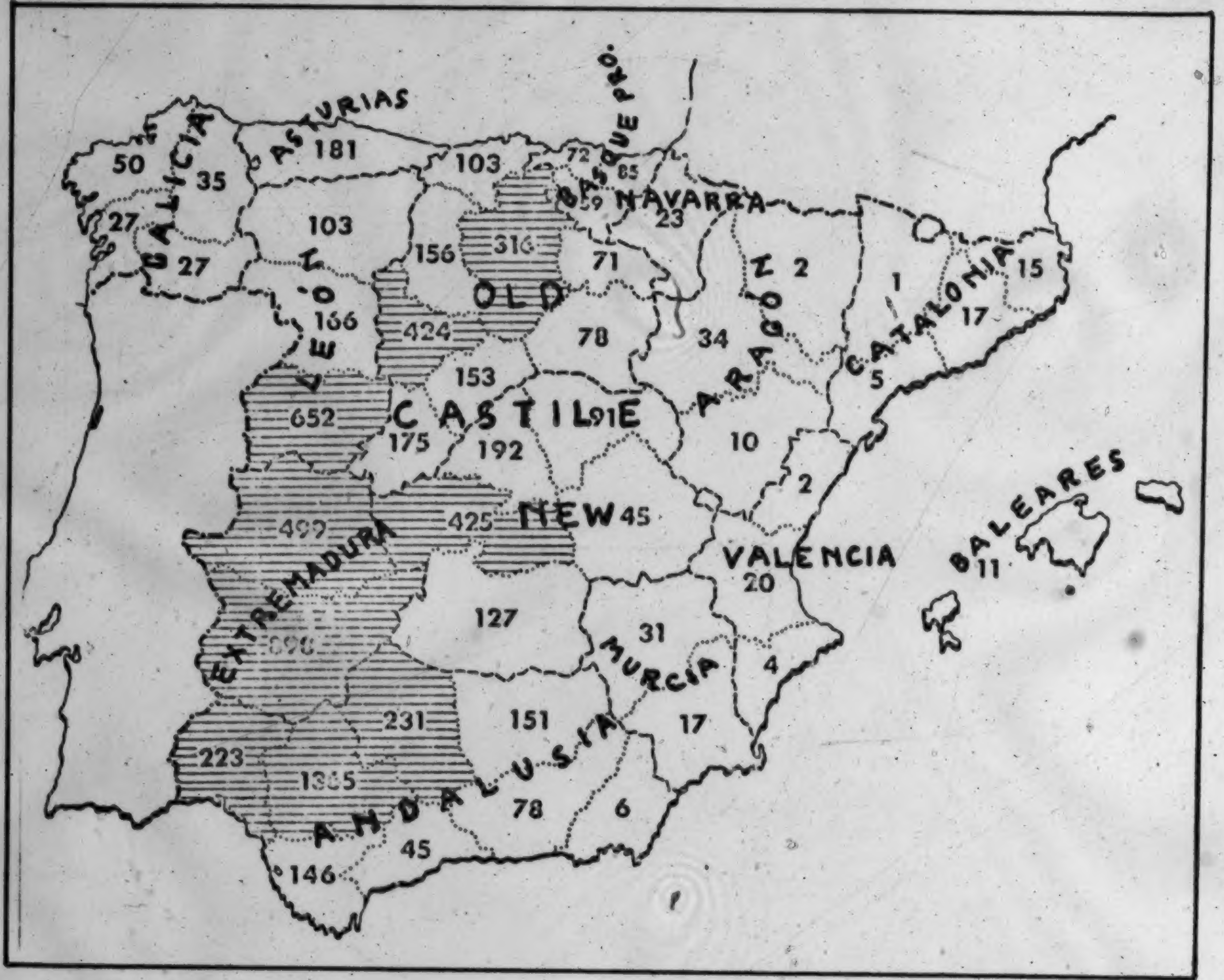

GALICIA
50
35
27
27
ASTURIAS
181
103
103
LEON
166
652
BASQUE PRO.
72
85
59
NAVARRA
23
156
316
OLD
71
424
78
153
CASTILE
91
175
192
NEW
45
425
499
EXTREMADURA
898
127
231
223
1385
ANDALUSIA
151
78
45
146
6
ARAGON
2
34
10
2
CATALONIA
1
15
17
5
VALENCIA
20
4
MURCIA
31
17
BALEARES
11

Figure 12. Emigrants to the Indies by provinces, 1509-1534.
Source: Historia de Espana y America, v. 2, p. 395.

socially-determined variations (as in the case of the differences in attitudes towards the world and life that existed between missionaries and soldiers), the vital attitudes and world views characteristic of the Castilian hidalgo were also common to most of the Christian Spaniards of the period, whatever their rank, status and regional origin. Self-esteem and concern with personal worth, continuous search for honor and will of seigneury, and a deep contempt of manual activities were cultural traits that, though they manifested themselves first, and with more intensity than anywhere else, among the Castilian hidalgo class, appeared to a greater or lesser degree in almost every Spanish individual of the period. Oviedo, speaking of the Spaniards living in the New World says:

> How will the Andalusian get along with the Valencian, the man from Perpignan with the one from Córdoba, the Galician with the Castilian. . . ? Who will reconcile the Basque and the Catalan, who are of such different provinces and tongues. . . ? But since the cause has been so great, there has been no cease in the flow of people of distinguished blood, and knights and hidalgos who decided to leave their homeland of Spain to take up residence in these parts.[3]

From these words we can conclude that the members of the heterogeneous group of Spaniards which came to the Indies were united in the prosecution of a common goal. What they considered lofty and full of prestige made Spaniards of them all. Further, Oviedo's words indicate that many of the Spaniards who came to the Indies were "people of distinguished blood and knights and hidalgos"; that is, precisely those Spaniards who are the best representatives of the vital attitudes and world view we have been studying. The conqueror Bernal Díaz del Castillo confirms Oviedo's assertion: "We all were hidalgos", he says, referring to the group of Spaniards who accompanied Cortés in the conquest of Mexico.[4] A glance at Table 1 or the map on Figure 12 will indicate also that the majority of people came either from the regions of the Castiles or from those of Andalusia and Extremadura, which two regions had been conquered by Castile and formed an integral part of its kingdom (see Figure 9). To confirm this fact should not come as a surprise for two main reasons: First, from the beginning of the conquest the Indies were considered to be the exclusive property of the kingdom of Castile, and Queen Isabella had excluded the Aragonese and Catalan from going to the Indies and participating in this imperial enterprise.[5] Secondly, Castile was the kingdom of Spain where the spirit of hidalguia was more deeply entrenched and consequently where more candidates were willing to leave for the Indies in the hope of gaining honor and fame.

It is also of interest to point out the fact that many of the sixteenth century Spaniards who came to the Indies were "segundones" or "tercerones" (second or third-born sons). This familial relationship left them no inheritance, because of the custom of primogeniture, with the consequence that they saw in the conquest of the new lands a "gentleman's road" to gain social acceptance and wealth back home, something which fate had denied them. That many, if not the majority, of the early sixteenth century Spaniards who went to the Indies were segundones of hidalgo families is brought to our attention by Oviedo when he valiantly apologizes for them in the following way:

> Many of those who find themselves here are as good at fighting the Turk as at dancing with ladies, and know how to do in peace or war what best fits their honor. For, although necessity compels them to live among savages away from their homeland, that same necessity makes them more worthy than others who were born well inherited, and can enjoy life at their ease.[6]

In the hope of gaining honor, the hidalgos who came to the Indies were always willing to risk their lives. A good proof of this is given later by Captain Francisco de Barrionuevo's words in an exhortation to his companions to move them to advance against the Indian enemy:

> Gentlemen, I came here with you with the purpose of serving God and the Emperor; it is not fitting for you to show signs of fear for you are hidalgos and persons experienced in greater perils. . . ; I am not considering turning back but advancing even at the price of my life; for I came here with the same intention as you: to gain honor, and not to lose it.[7]

The concern with honor was all-powerful and ever-present among the Spaniards in the New World, and it was the major factor motivating them to action, independently of whether gain was to be obtained or not. The following event shows this clearly. The Spaniards of Captain Pedrarias' expedition were planning to land at Santa Marta on the Urabá coast (Caribbean coast of Colombia), on a reconnaissance expedition when the natives, armed with poisoned arrows, appeared on the shore with the intention of preventing them from landing. At the sight of the prospect of running the danger of being mortally wounded without obtaining considerable benefits, the Spaniards vacillated between going on shore and remaining on board their ships. A consultation was held in which different opinions were expressed. Fear counselled them to stop where they were, but concern over losing face and acting as men of honor urged them to land. They feared the poisoned arrows which the natives shot with such sure aim, but on the other hand it seemed shameful, unworthy and infamous to sail by with such a large fleet and so many soldiers without landing. Finally, concern with their honor carried the day and they landed by means of large barques.[8]

To better realize in which directions the concern with honor channelled the activities of the early sixteenth century Spaniards in the Indies, it is useful to review briefly the life-courses of some of them as they were viewed and related by their contemporary eye-witness Fernández de Oviedo.

Friar Nicolás de Ovando, Comendador Mayor of the military order of Alcántara[9] and Governor of the island of Española (Haiti), enjoyed a substantial income of 8,000 ducats a year or more. This he spent in building fifteen houses of stone, all of them very well constructed. "Six of them he left to the poor of the hospital of St. Nicholaus, of which he was the founder, and the other nine he left to his order and convent... When he took leave from this city (Santo Domingo) he had to borrow 500 castellanos for his trip; not being a greedy person he had spent all his fortune on the poor and needy."[10]

Fernando de Soto, first a soldier with Governor Pedrarias de Avila, became later governor of Cuba and Adelantado of Florida. "He was present in Peru when the great prince Atabaliba was made prisoner, obtained a good reward and was able to return with a great fortune to Spain. Soon, however, he resolved to return to the Indies where he lost life and fortune."[11]

Antonio Osorio, "brother of the Marquis of Astorga, had enjoyed in Spain an income of 2,000 ducats. He had forsaken it all to accompany Hernando de Soto in his expedition, and now found himself poor."[12]

Antonio Sedeño, Captain General and Governor of the Island of San Juan (Puerto Rico), "was one of the richest men that lived on the island at the time". However, "he lost all in the search of more honor and profit and to his desire of giving orders and be more than others".[13]

Diego de Ordaz "was a poor hidalgo of 'one sword and one cape', who obtained a generous reward and would have stayed rich if *his thoughts had given him contentment with what he already had*. But this not being the case, he went to Spain to relate his services to His Imperial Majesty and he was granted the investiture of Santiago and other honorary benefits". Finally, "*in his desire of gaining new titles*, he obtained for himself and undertook the settlement of the Marañón River".[14] In this enterprise he lost both his life and fortune.

Captain Francisco de Montejo arrived in the Indies as a poor hidalgo; he participated in the conquest of New Spain and was able to return to Spain with a good capital, which helped him to build his house at Salamanca and to create a mayorazgo that rented 300,000 maravedis or more a year. Oviedo thinks this should have been enough to satisfy him, but that, unfortunately, "his intrepid spirit made it impossible for him to settle down and he sold everything *to employ himself in greater things*".[15] His Majesty granted him a title of nobility and, at his request, named him Adelantado of Yucatan, a region where he died a few years after.

Ponce de León "had conquered and pacified the island of Borriquén (Puerto Rico) and through industry and good management of his sources of income (granjerías) he became a very rich man, owning a multitude of cattle, sheep, pigs and mares, and extracting plenty of gold from the mines, through which procedures he accumulated wealth enough to be able to live very comfortably in this life, and even to help others in their miseries". However, Oviedo indicates that "as *he was an hidalgo and a man of noble and lofty thoughts*, it seemed to him that, once he had lost the post of Governor of the island of San Juan, he could not remain nor live happily where others would command, and so he decided to occupy his time in something worthwhile and to ennoble his person with positions of honor and state by requesting from the King a position as Adelantado of Florida".[16]

Pedro de Alvarado "came to the Indies as soldier of 'one cape and one sword', poor, but noble in blood, with the intention of seeking a living as is usually done by hidalgos and men of honor. As reward for his good diligence and gentle ability and courageous daring, he secured a large estate and rich lands". However, he did not settle down to a comfortable life; instead "he began to design and contrive things of greater importance than his forces were able to achieve, and of more magnitude than he was able to cope with[17], and his restless spirit would not be satisfied with what he had already got".[18]

Oviedo's biographies serve to indicate that the Spaniards who came to the Indies were primarily motivated by their desire to gain honor. Material gains were subordinated to the satisfaction of this desire, and played a role of secondary importance in the life of these people. Peter Martyr, a keen observer, had soon noticed that the Spaniards were people "of a restless character, constantly seeking to accomplish great undertakings".[19] Hernán Cortés, immediately after the conquest of Mexico and the pacification of the region, started the construction of vessels on the Pacific coast to sail over the South Seas to discover islands near the equator or below it, where he hoped to find gold and silver and new kinds of spices.[20] It was not without cause that he had added the four words "of the Ocean Sea" to the name which he had given New Spain. He was infatuated with being the first man to discover that route to the Indies which had been the ambition of

Columbus. Above all he wanted to expand his dominions further, gaining more fame, glory and seigneury in the process. He wrote to the Emperor:

> I am positive that, God willing, I shall discover for your Majesty more kingdoms and dominions than all those discovered up till now, and that, with His guidance, my projects will succeed and Your Highness will become the Sovereign of the World.[21]

This statement fits well with the way in which Peter Martyr sees the character of Cortés:

> A proud hearted man, always ambitious of new dignities. He has already for a long time enjoyed the titles of Governor and Adelantado of the immense regions embraced under the name of New Spain. He recently requested investiture as knight of Santiago.[22]

And the soldier Cristóbal Pérez described Cortes as:

> usually dressing in black and silk; his attitude is not proud, except that he likes to be surrounded by a large number of servants -- I mean attendants, chaplains, treasurers, and all such that usually accompany a great sovereign.[23]

There is then abundant evidence to point out that Cortés, as is true of his compatriots, was obsessed with the idea of gaining honor. He himself has spoken very clearly on this respect. When disappointed and saddened by what he perceived as a campaign set up to defame and deprive him of the prestige he had gained in the eyes of the Emperor, he reacts vehemently and offers us a confession of the inner aspirations that dominated his soul. On that occasion he wrote to Charles V:

> It is a matter in which honor is concerned, to gain which I have suffered great toils and exposed my person to a thousand dangers; may God not grant, nor your Majesty permit nor consent that the tongues of envious, evil and angry men should succeed in despoiling me of it. I neither wish nor beg your Majesty in reward of my services to grant me any other boon than this, without which God grant I may cease to live.[24]

These words clearly indicate the extreme degree to which honor dominated Cortés' life. It was for the sake of his honor that Cortés had not only risked his life many times, but even in his days as a prosperous farmer and notary on the island of Cuba he was spending more than he earned entertaining his friends or buying his wife costly dresses. When he became the powerful Marquis of Oaxaca, the situation did not change. As he himself confesses in a letter to the Council of the Indies:

> . . . as I have arrived in these parts indebted and as, since then, I always have been, and still am, indebted, and as there are continually constant expenditures that I am obliged to cover, I entreat Your Lordships that they may ascertain how I be secured the means of sustenance during the days of my life, and how after these are over it be recognized in my children that their father was worth something.[25]

In his incessant search for honor the Spaniard in the Indies would give proof of an admirable energy, and would expose himself to countless dangers and difficulties. Commenting upon the hardships Cortés and his companions went through in the conquest of Mexico, Peter Martyr says, without explanation:

> Of all our contemporaries only Spaniards are capable of withstanding such trials. This Spanish race is formed by nature to support, more easily than any other, hardships of every kind -- hunger, thirst, heat, cold, long watches and open air encampments, as necessity demands.[26]

And the historian Oviedo remarked that ". . . in these parts for every one who was able to gather wealth and return to Castile with or without it, there have been many more without comparison, who have lost their lives in the enterprise."[27] And further he specifies: "Here in the Indies of 1,000 "incomers" not 100, indeed not even 50, manage to return home; and sometimes of 30 incomers there is no one who escapes with life."[28] Translating a statement of Las Casas, we find it is his opinion that "The labors spent by the Spaniards in the Indies are so great that it is impossible to overrate them in their harshness and unbearability."[29] Finally, an English observer, Sir Walter Raleigh, wrote in his History of the World:

> Here I cannot forbear to commend the patient virtue of the Spaniards. We seldom or never find any nation hath endured so many misadventures and miseries as the Spaniards have done in their Indian discoveries. . . . Tempests and shipwrecks, famines, overthrows, mutinies, heat and cold, pestilence and all manner of disease, both old and new, together with extreme poverty, and want of all things needful, have been the enemies, wherewith every one of their most noble discoveries, at one time or other, hath encountered.[30]

The central point on which we have been concentrating, namely, that the early sixteenth century Spaniards who came to the New World were motivated, above all, by their preoccupation and concern with upholding and gaining honor, is confirmed by new evidence brought to light in some recent studies. James Lockhart has been looking at the social background and characteristics of the 168 Spaniards who, under Captain Francisco Pizarro, were present at the distribution of the Inca treasure of Cajamarca. The social origins of this group of Spaniards were classified by the author as follows: "One in ten was a notary; twenty or thirty would not have been out of place at the royal court. . . . The main strength of the group numerically and qualitatively was in capable, literate commoners, lower ranked professionals and marginal hidalgos -- three types with much in common".[31] Lockhart emphasizes the fact that these men were motivated by a double goal: a seigneurial life for themselves and lasting honor and wealth for their families.[32] He also stresses the fact that "the desire to keep a large establishment and enhance the family name was a motivation actively shaping the lives of loquacious and taciturn, stable and unstable, low and high."[33]

In a study of the early colonial society in Peru, Lockhart has shown some of the ways in which the concern with honor and the seigneurial ambitions of the Spaniards manifested themselves. Central to both duties and ambitions of the encomendero was the "casa poblada", an occupied or peopled house. The term implied a Spanish house, a table where many guests were maintained,[34] negro slaves, a staff of Spanish and Indian servants and a stable of horses. The "casa poblada" was the largest single element in the dream of a lordly life which all Spaniards shared. Other things important to this ideal were fine clothing, ownership of agricultural land and herds of livestock, and holding office on the municipal councils.[35] Lockhart calls attention to the fact that:

> whatever their backgrounds, all the encomenderos tried in some measure to realize the same specifically outlined social and economic ambitions shared by the whole Spanish population, but which only the encomenderos could fully achieve.[36]

The Spanish merchants living in Peru are seen by Lockhart as "rootless as gypsies, travelling constantly, avoiding permanent investments, anxious to climb the next rung of a ladder that extended from Potosí through Lima to Seville."[37] The artisans also were attempting to realize the seigneurial ambitions which all Spaniards shared, and some of them succeeded to a surprising extent in the externals, with large houses worth up to a thousand pesos, numerous slaves in their shops and on their land, and a retinue of helpers and apprentices.[38]

While Spain still observed some restrictions on the types of dress allowed to the lower classes, artisans in Peru paraded in the town squares in the finest fabrics, within view of shocked governors and viceroys who always threatened to take measures, but never did.[39]

As for the peasantry, it is of interest to find that this social class did not exist in Spanish Peru. The lower levels of the agricultural sector were occupied by Negroes and Indians. The few Spaniards who deigned to remain in agriculture did so as supervisors, being called "capataces" or "labradores", rather than "villanos" or peasants.[40]

NOTES

[1] Catálogo de pasajeros a Indias; Sevilla, Cristóbal Bermúdez Plata ed., 3 vols., 1940-1946.

[2] Fernández de Oviedo, Historia general y natural, Book II, Chapter 13.

[3] Fernández de Oviedo, ibidem, Book 2, Chapter 13.

[4] Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España, Chapter 207.

[5] As she stated in her will: "Granada, the Canary islands and all those lands discovered and to be discovered, conquered or yet to be conquered, shall remain in my kingdoms of Castile and Leon." (Alonso de Santa Cruz, Crónica de los Reyes Católicos, J. de Mata Carriazo ed., Sevilla 1951, I, pp. 95 and 335). However, after the death of Isabella in 1504, King Ferdinand granted permission to go to the Indies to all the vassals of his kingdoms, and later the Emperor Charles extended this permission to include some of his non-Spanish vassals. (Oviedo, Historia general. . . , Book 3, Chapter 7).

[6] Fernández de Oviedo, Historia general. . . , Book 18, Proemio.

[7] Ibidem, Book 5, Chapter 6.

[8] As related by Peter Martyr, *De Orbe Novo*, Third Decade, Book 5.

[9] The military orders of Castile were three (Santiago, Alcántara and Calatrava) and they acquired their importance during the Middle Ages in their struggle against the Moors. In contrast with other crusading orders of Europe, the military orders of Castile grew continually stronger during the Middle Ages as a consequence of the long struggle against the Spanish Moslem. The military orders fought bravely against the Moors, and received many privileges and lands from the Crown. They represented in sixteenth century Spain power, prestige and wealth, and to be a member in any of the three orders was an honorable distinction and an explicit recognition of the hidalguia and purity of lineage of the individual. (See J.F. Ramsey, pp. 90-91).

[10] Fernández de Oviedo, *Historia general. . .* , Book 3, Chapter 12.

[11] ———, Book 17, Chapter 23.

[12] ———, Book 17, Chapter 27.

[13] ———, Book 24, Chapter 1.

[14] ———, Book 24, Chapter 2.

[15] ———, Book 32, Chapter 3. The "Don" was the exclusive attribute of the nobility.

[16] ———, Book 36, Chapter 1.

[17] The Spanish sentence in Oviedo's text goes: "que no hizo sino enhilar e trazar en su mente e arbitrio cosas de mayor importancia que sus fuerzas, e de mas posibilidad que él tenía. . ."

[18] Fernández de Oviedo, *Historia general. . .* , Book 41, Chapter 3.

[19] Peter Martyr, Fourth Decade, Book 1.

[20] Ibidem, Eight Decade, Book 10.

[21] Cortés, Fourth Dispatch.

[22] Peter Martyr, Eight Decade, Book 10.

[23] Ibidem, Eight Decade, Book 3.

[24] Fifth Letter, in J.B. Morris, Five Letters of Cortés to the Emperor, 1519-1526; New York, Norton and Company Inc., 1962, p. 373.

[25] Letter of Cortés to the Council of the Indies, Documentos inéditos de América, vol. 3, pp. 535-432.

[26] Peter Martyr, Fifth Decade, Book 6.

[27] Fernández de Oviedo, Historia general. . . , Book 24, Chapter 4.

[28] Ibidem, Book 32, Chapter 2.

[29] Bartolomé de las Casas, Historia de las Indias, Book I, Chapter 121.

[30] Transcribed in Irving A. Leonard, Books of the Brave; New York, Gordian Press, 1964, p. 10.

[31] James Lockhart, The Men of Cajamarca: A Social and Biographical Study of the First Conquerors of Peru; Austin and London, University of Texas Press, 1972, p. 41.

[32] Ibidem, p. 64.

[33] Ibidem, p. 118.

[34] The encomenderos were always willing to take in and maintain guests, particularly people from their home town in Spain, partly from charity and custom, and partly because supporting a household of guests was important to their prestige. Guests stood in a dependent relationship to the lord of the house, and were expected to follow his lead in politics and accompany him as a part of his retinue. Sometimes the number of guests in an encomendero's house reached 20 to 30, though as many was not generally the rule. (See J. Lockhart, Spanish Peru 1532-

1560: A Colonial Society; Madison, Milwaukee, London, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1968, p. 141).

[35] J. Lockhart, Spanish Peru. . . , p. 21.

[36] Ibidem, p. 33.

[37] Ibidem, p. 95.

[38] Also, a considerable group of those who were artisans in Spain had become encomenderos in the Indies. The Franciscan Motolinía, writing in 1555 says that: "here (in New Spain) even the shoemakers and blacksmithers had, and still have, encomiendas." (Carta de Fray Toribio de Motolinía al Emperador; Colección de documentos inéditos de América, p. 274.

[39] Ibidem, p. 101.

[40] Ibidem, p. 110.

PART III

THE PERCEPTION AND EVALUATION OF THE NATIVES AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE NEW WORLD

In this section we shall investigate how the early sixteenth century Spaniards perceived and evaluated the natives and natural environment of the New World, and how their cultural attitudes and outlook on life influenced them in these perceptions and evaluations. Attention will be focused on two different geographical areas: The Caribbean, principally the island of Española, and New Spain.[1] Columbus' perception and evaluation of the natives and natural environment of the Caribbean will be considered first because, although Columbus' attitudes to life were significantly different from those of the contemporary Spaniards, he nevertheless, as discoverer of a new land, was the creator of an image that has to be taken as the starting point in a series of related perceptions and evaluations of the natives and lands of the New World which influenced and succeeded one another.

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[1] For the practical purposes of this study, New Spain will refer chiefly to the central area of today's state of Mexico.

CHAPTER VII

COLUMBUS' PERCEPTION AND EVALUATION OF THE LANDS AND NATIVES OF THE CARIBBEAN

The Perception and Evaluation of the Natural Environment

On his first voyage Columbus and his crew visited a number of the Bahaman islands, the Cuban north shore, and the north coast of Haiti (see Figure 13), which Columbus named Española. The beauty of these islands moved Columbus greatly. They were islands of perpetual spring. The birds were of many forms and colors and the land was extremely fertile. In Columbus' journal we can find comments such as the following: Of the Bahamas he said:

> . . . these islands are very green and fertile and the breezes are very soft. . . . May Your Highness believe that this is the best and most fertile and temperate and level and good land that there is in the world.[1]

Of Cuba:

> . . . all is green and the vegetation is as that of Andalusia in April. The singing of little birds is such that it seems that a man could never wish to leave this place; the flocks of parrots darken the sun, and there are large and small birds of so different kinds and so unlike ours, that it is a marvel. There are, moreover, trees of a thousand types, all with their various fruits and all scented, so that it is a wonder.[2]

Of Española:

> The island is very large. . . . It is all well cultivated. . . . There are some plains, the loveliest in the world, and as fit for sowing as the lands of Castile, and indeed these are superior. . . . The plain of Córdoba did not equal them, the two being as different as day and night. . . . The best lands in Castile for beauty and fertility could not compare with these.[3]

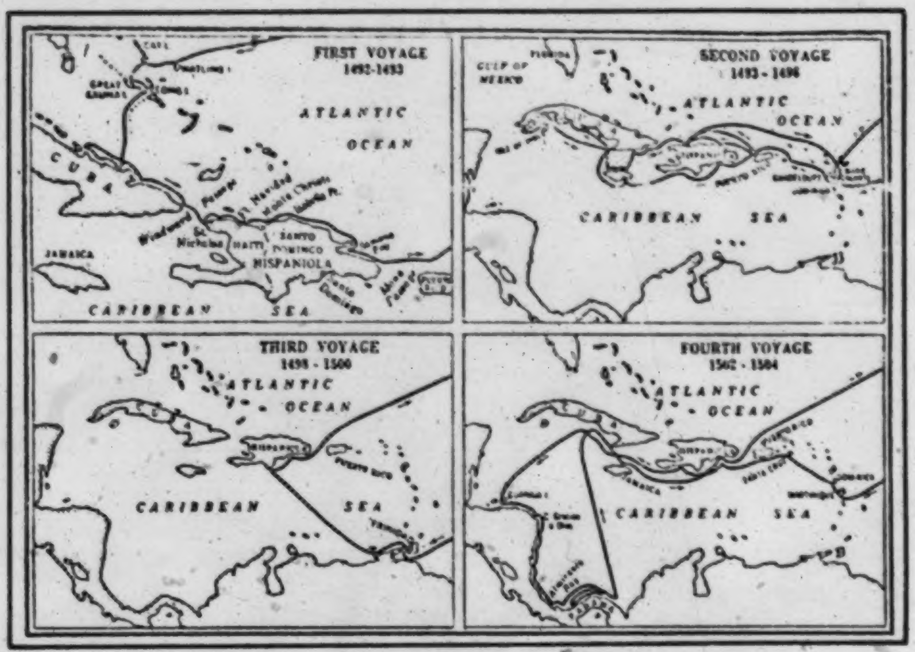

FIRST VOYAGE
1492-1493
ATLANTIC
OCEAN
CUBA
JAMAICA
HAITI
SANTO DOMINGO
HISPANIOLA
CARIBBEAN SEA
SECOND VOYAGE
1493-1496
GULF OF MEXICO
ATLANTIC
OCEAN
CARIBBEAN SEA
THIRD VOYAGE
1498-1500
ATLANTIC
OCEAN
CARIBBEAN SEA
FOURTH VOYAGE
1502-1504
ATLANTIC
OCEAN
CARIBBEAN SEA

Figure 13. The Voyages of Columbus in the New World.

Source: A.C. Wilgus, Historical Atlas of Latin America, p. 56.

All told, Columbus tended to believe that "nowhere under the sun there can be found lands superior in fertility, in moderation of cold and heat, in abundance of good and healthy water."[4] His view of the new lands was enthusiastic to the extreme, even after making allowance for a certain degree of exaggeration which Columbus used to impress more on the mind of the Catholic Monarchs the beauty and potential wealth of the lands he had discovered:

> The sierras and the mountains, the plains, the champaigns, are so lovely and so rich for planting and sowing, for breeding livestock of every kind, for building towns and villages. The harbors of the sea in her are such as cannot be believed to exist unless they have been seen, and so with the rivers, many and great, and of good water, the majority of which contain gold. . . . There are many spices and great mines of gold and other metals.[5]

The finding of gold appears to have been the main preoccupation in Columbus' mind. On his first landing, in the island of Guanahani[6], he informs us that:

> I was attentive and labored to know if they (the natives) had gold and from signs I was able to understand that, going round the island to the south there was a king who had large vessels of it and possessed much gold. So I resolved to go to the south-west, to seek the gold and precious stones.[7]

Two days later he was already on another island "to learn whether there is gold there". And the next day on another because "as far as I can gather there is a gold mine there."[8] In the account of his first ten days in the islands the word "gold" appears twenty-one times.[9] Sometimes there are passages like this: "It is gold, I cannot be mistaken, with the aid of Our Lord I cannot fail to find the place from whence it comes."[10]

Columbus' perception of the physical environment of the islands as being rich in gold was in part due to his belief that gold was to be found in hot climates, an old view that gold was engendered by heat, in contrast with silver, which was engendered by cold.[11] In the mind of Columbus gold was equally associated with islands. Throughout his expeditions he heard of islands rich in gold, even of some that were gold: In Española the Admiral learned from an old man that:

> there were many islands, at a distance of a hundred leagues or more, in which very much gold was produced, so much that one island was all gold and in the others there was so great a quantity that they gather it and sift it with sieves, and they smelt it and make bars and a thousand worked articles.[12]

In Columbus' mind the Caribbean islands, apart from being rich in gold, were also to abound in spices because he believed until his death that the lands he had discovered were a part of Asia. Furthermore, the West Indies have a great number of aromatic trees, and Columbus felt sure that he had discovered the true items of the spice trade. "There are", he says, "many herbs and many trees which will be of great value in Spain for dyes and as medicinal spices. . . ."[13] And he further adds: ". . . if I arrive anywhere where there is gold and spices in quantity, I shall wait until I have collected as much as I am able. Accordingly I do nothing but go forward in the hope of finding these."[14]

In brief, Columbus was obsessed by the search for gold and with the idea that he was in the East Indies. His perception of the natural environment of the new lands and the interpretation of their resources were to be influenced by these two ideas. Sauer summarizes very well the implications of this situation for the future evaluation of the resources of the New World by the Spaniards:

> Columbus gave a romantic publicity to the new lands, portraying them above all as lands of infinite gold. All the fabled gold lands of antiquity were relocated in his discoveries or in parts he was about to discover. He was looking for gold mines from the first landing on a coral island to his last days in Veragua. It did not matter that his success was slight. Always and everywhere there was vast promise of gold. The sovereigns and people of Spain became imbued by his obsession, picturesquely and fantastically presented. The course of the Spanish Empire was first turned to its fateful search for gold by the "idee fixe" that dominated Columbus.[15]

The Perception and Evaluation of the Natives

Passed down from the Middle Ages, the early sixteenth century European still believed in the existence of strange forms of life, hydras, gorgons, Amazons, mermaids, weird cannibals and singing Ariels.[16] "Wild men" or "Naturmenschen" had captured the popular imagination during the Middle Ages. They were depicted on the facades of churches, as decorations on manuscripts, and in tapestries, as ferocious beings of wild men holding mighty clubs in their hands.[17] Wild men served as jamb figures on the facade of fifteenth century San Gregorio monastery in Valladolid in which Las Casas spent many of the last years of his life. (see Figure 14).

Columbus and his Spanish crew hoped to find some of these strange beings in the course of their explorations. Soon, however, they could become convinced that the islands were inhabited by men who, in their physical appearance, bore remarkable similarities to other men and to themselves. Columbus wrote in this respect: "In these islands I have so far found no human monstrosities, as many expected, but on the contrary, the whole population is very well formed."[18] The first natives encountered, those of the island of Guanahaní, were described

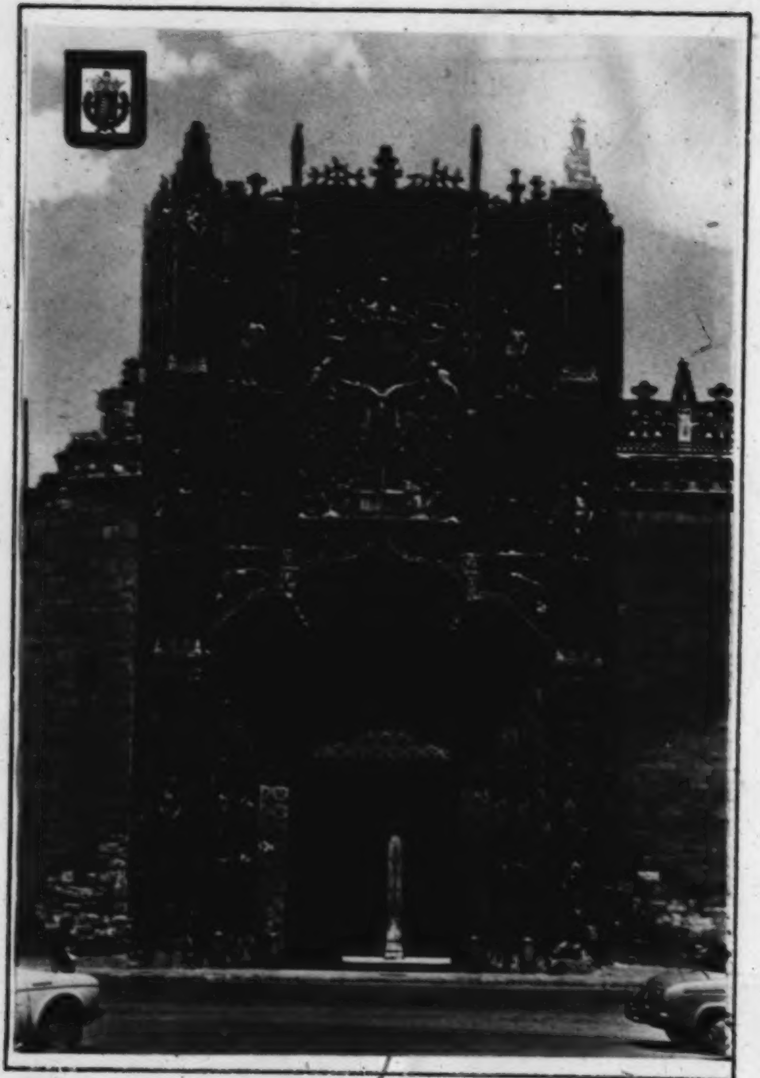


Figure 14. San Gregorio Monastery in Valladolid

by Columbus as "generally fairly tall, good looking and well proportioned." And later, he specifies further:

> All have very broad foreheads and heads, more so than has any people that I have seen up to now. Their eyes are very lovely and not small. They are not at all black, but the color of Canarians. . . . Their legs are very straight and all alike; they have no bellies but very good figures.[19]

As for the spiritual and civic virtues of the natives of the islands Columbus remarks that:

> They are very gentle and do not know what it is to be wicked, or to kill others, or to steal, and are unwarlike. . . . They are so generous with all that they possess that no one would believe it who had not seen it. They refuse nothing that they possess.[20]

And, referring to the natives of Española, he says:

> They are a people so full of love and without greed, and suitable for every purpose, that I assure your Highness that I believe there is no better race in the world. They love their neighbors as themselves, and they have the softest and gentlest voices in the world, and they are always smiling. They go around naked, men and women, as their mothers bore them. But Your Highness may believe that in their intercourse with one another they have very good customs, and the king maintains a very marvellous state, of a style so orderly that it is a pleasure to see it, and they have good memories, and they wish to see everything and ask what it is and for what it is used.[21]

However, all these praises of the character and physical appearance of the natives -- born partly of a desire to demonstrate the good qualities of the land and peoples he had discovered -- were made under an implicit assumption, namely, that the inhabitants of the islands were inferior to the Christians and born to be subordinated to their will. On the Day of the first landing, Columbus sized up the natives thus: "They should be good servants and of quick intelligence, since I see that they very soon say all that is said to them."[22] The kind of servitude

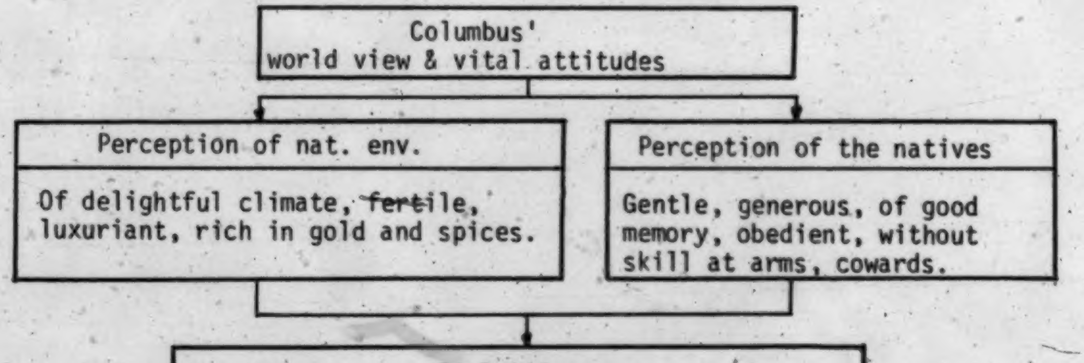
Columbus had in mind resembled closely slavery, for otherwise he would not have said: "When Your Highness so commands, they can all be carried off to Castile or held captive in the island itself."[23] In putting this idea into practice Columbus saw no impediment for:

> They have no arms and are all naked and without any knowledge of war, and very cowardly, so that a thousand of them would not face three.

And he continues:

> They are also fitted to be ruled and to set to work, to cultivate the land and to do all else that may be necessary, and you may build towns and teach them to go clothed and adopt our customs.[24]

In the following diagram we reproduce schematically Columbus' perception and evaluation of the natural environment and natives of the New World.


Columbus'
world view & vital attitudes
Perception of nat. env.
Of delightful climate, fertile, luxuriant, rich in gold and spices.
Perception of the natives
Gentle, generous, of good memory, obedient, without skill at arms, cowards.
Evaluation
Natural environment seen as a potential producer of gold and spices.
Natives seen as potential good servants and slaves.

Columbus' Plan of Resource Use and the Origins of the Encomienda

Columbus' evaluation of the natural and human potential of the island of Española is reflected in the plan he devised for the profitable use of those elements of the environment he had perceived as resources. In his plan, The Indians were to pay tribute in gold and spices.[25] Other income would be derived from the exportation of Brazil wood and traffic in slaves.[26] The Spaniards, on the other hand, were to work as hired employees assuming the responsibility of such things as military defence, the construction of sturdy warehouses to keep gold and food supplies safe, as well as the construction of houses, furniture, churches, and palaces for the commander. During their free time, the Spaniards were to devote themselves to raising of cattle and cultivating of crops.[27]

This plan, logical as it may have seemed to Columbus' mind and logical as it may appear to us, was unacceptable to the Spaniards who were placed under the orders of the Admiral. These Spaniards disliked the roles that Columbus had assigned them. They considered it unworthy and degrading to be employed in such manual activities, and asked the Admiral for permission to use the natives for these and other services.[28] Columbus granted them few of their wishes and discontentment grew. To make matters worse, hunger set in as the provisions were running low, and the Spaniards had not started any agricultural colonization. Among the people there existed a general longing to return to Spain, which was expressed in the common oath "así Dios me lleve a Castilla" (may God grant me a speedy return to Spain).[29] If Columbus had permitted the Spaniards to leave, the island would soon have been abandoned. Finally, Francisco de Roldán rebelled against the authority of the Admiral and, accompanied by eighty companions, abandoned the Spanish settlements and went to live among the Indians. Soon the group gathered strength with the addition of new deserters. In 1499, after a revolt against Columbus' brother Bartolomé, it was decided to pardon the mutineers to get them back into the colony. Their leader, Roldán, was willing to submit only on condition that he and his friends be given allotments of land plus the right to use the services of their Indian inhabitants. Columbus acceded, and also consented to charge the natives with the responsibility of supplying with food and services the Spaniards' fortresses and villages. These were the origins of the New World encomienda, or as it was first called, repartimiento.[30] As Las Casas points out, this institution became established in the new lands "cuan sin pensallo."[31] It had been the end result of an unplanned and spontaneous process during which the Spaniards had forced Columbus to accept their world view. The friction that originated in the clash of two opposed images -- of two different conceptions of life which confronted each other -- manifested itself in a series of accusations and counter-accusations raised from two different logical spheres. Roldán and his accomplices proferred charges against the Admiral and his brother Bartolomé who, according to them, were impious, unjust men, enemies of the Spaniards. They were envious, proud and intolerable tyrants. The Admiral countered by saying that the men who dared to accuse him were debauchees, profligates, thieves, seducers, ravishers, vagabonds,

> having been brought to the island of Española originally to do the work of miners or of camp servants, they now never moved a step from their houses on foot, but insisted on being carried about the island upon the shoulders of the

> unfortunate natives, as though they were dignitaries of the State.[32]

But the aspirations of the Spaniards of Española to a seigneurial life based on their assumed right to exercise personal authority over the Indians were not to remain unchallenged for long. The Catholic Monarchs had not sanctioned the repartimientos of Indians that were made under Columbus. When in 1502 they sent out Nicolás de Ovando as governor of the island, they gave him strict orders not to use forced labor except in mines or public works, and then with moderation and adequate pay. Ovando tried honestly to fulfill his orders, but eventually it became clear to him that without enforced labor the colony would die. The Spaniards were never willing to renounce their assumed right of seigneury over the natives, and showed no interest in agriculture or in employing themselves in manual activities. As a result of Ovando's discouraging reports, the Crown, through the orders of March and December of 1503, decided on a compromise. It would legalize the repartimiento and the forced labor of Indians, but at the same time would try to protect them from exploitation. The settlers were enjoined to treat the Indians well and pay them decent wages for they were "free men" and vassals only to the Monarchs of Spain.[33]

NOTES

[1] C. Columbus, The Journal of Christopher Columbus, Translated by Cecil Jane, London, Anthony Blond and the Orion Press, 1960. pp. 28 and 36.

[2] Ibidem, p. 40.

[3] Ibidem, p. 90 and 97.

[4] Ibidem, p. 77.

[5] Ibidem, p. 194.

[6] Called by him San Salvador, probably Watling Island.

[7] Ibidem, p. 26.

[8] Ibidem, p. 32.

[9] Germán Arciniegas, Caribbean Sea of the New World; New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1946, p. 27.

[10] The Journal of Christopher Columbus, p. 31.

[11] Carl O. Sauer, The Early Spanish Main; Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1966, p. 23.

[12] The Journal of Christopher Columbus, p. 107.

[13] "but" -- he laments -- "I cannot recognize them and this causes me much sorrow." Ibidem, p. 39.

[14] Ibidem.

[15] Carl O. Sauer, The Early Spanish Main, p. 291.

[16] Irving Leonard, op. cit., p. 11.

[17] Lewis Hanke, Aristotle and the American Indians; Chicago, Henry Regnery Co., 1959, p. 4.

[18] C. Columbus, The Journal of Christopher Columbus, p. 198.

[19] Ibidem, pp. 24 and 25.

[20] Ibidem, pp. 57 and 194.

[21] Ibidem, p. 124.

[22] Ibidem, p. 24.

[23] Ibidem, p. 28.

[24] Ibidem, p. 101.

[25] Peter Martyr provides us with some information on this matter: "The mountaineers of Cibao were to bring to the town of Santo Domingo every three months a specified measure filled with gold. The islanders who cultivated the lands which "spontaneously" produced spices and cotton, were pledged to pay a fixed sum per head." (First Decade, Book 4).

[26] See Las Casas, *Historia de las Indias*, Book I, Chapter 150.

[27] For more details on this point, see G. Céspedes del Castillo, "Las Indias en el reinado de los Reyes Católicos", in *Historia de España y América*, vol. 2., pp. 530-534.

[28] In this context Las Casas relates an interesting incident which took place between Columbus and the Spaniards, and which serves to prove how much the avoidance of mechanical activities was a question of honor for the latter: As the provisions were starting to run low, with only bags of unground wheat left, the Admiral decided to build a dam and a number of water mills to grind the grain. As there were few "mechanical officials" (workers and craftsmen) to go about the task, he ordered the hidalgos to participate in the work. They refused and the Admiral resorted to violence. "From this", Las Casas says, "nothing could come but that all, young and old, began to loathe his person; hence we can understand why, from then on, he was defamed as a cruel and detestable character, and as a mistreater of the Spaniards and as a person unworthy of any kind of government." (*Historia de las Indias*, Book I, Chapter 92).

[29] Las Casas, *Historia de las Indias*, Book I, Chapter 149.

[30] Repartimiento, or distribution; that is, the distribution of Indians to particular Spaniards to whom they were to render service. In its first manifestations in the West Indies, repartimiento was so closely associated with encomienda that the two words were employed interchangeably. (See F.A. Kirkpatrick, "Repartimiento-Encomienda", *Hisp. Am. Hist. Rev.*, vol. 19, 1939, pp. 272-279).

[31] Without suspecting it, that is, when nobody expected it. (*Historia de las Indias*, Book I, Chapter 155).

[32] Peter Martyr, First Decade, Book 7.

[33] J.F. Ramsey, loc. cit., p. 267.

CHAPTER VIII

THE EARLY SIXTEENTH CENTURY SPANIARD'S IMAGE OF ESPAÑOLA

The Perception and Evaluation of the Natural Environment

The official recognition of the encomienda system represented a highly welcome victory for the settlers of Española. During the Admiral's regime they had felt embittered and depressed to the point where they longed only for an immediate return to Spain. With the establishment of the encomienda system, however, pessimism was succeeded by optimism. It was now that the image Columbus had helped to create of the discovered islands as places of infinite gold, inhabited by an obedient and submissive population, acquired in the minds of the Spaniards its real significance. It was now that they could freely enjoy personal seigneury over the Indians, and had at their disposal abundant labor to collect gold and, in this way, become rich men. Las Casas writes that by 1507, in Spain: ". . . the people's ears rang with the sound that in the Indies much gold was obtained, and that whoever secured himself an encomienda would have gold and be happy."[1] And Peter Martyr, writing in 1510, says: "It is only gold of all the products of Española to which the Spaniards give all their attention."[2] This humanist well reflects the mood of optimism, of changed perception, which reigned in Spain at the time when, writing about 1516, he states that:

> Spain need no longer plough the ground to the depth of the infernal regions or open great roads or pierce mountains at the cost of labor and the risk of a thousand dangers, in order to draw wealth from the earth. She will find

> riches on the surface, in shallow diggings; she will find them in the sun-dried banks of rivers; it will suffice merely to sift the earth. Cosmographers unanimously recognize that venerable antiquity received not such benefit from nature.[3]

And he declares further: "The Spaniards never weary of repeating, as a proof of the wealth they dream of, that by just scratching the earth almost anywhere, grains of gold are found; I only repeat here what they have written."[4]

At a time when the wealth in precious metals that had been thought to exist in Española was materializing in the form of significant quantities of gold entering Spain at regular intervals;[5] this island existed in the minds of the Spaniards in the form of an image endowed with all kinds of good qualities. In 1516 Peter Martyr was portraying Española as one of the most blessed lands where man could ever live:

> Española is far more favored than Italy in its climate, for throughout its greatest extent, it enjoys such an agreeable climate that neither the rigours of cold nor excessive heat are known . . . During the entire year the trees are covered with leaves, and the plains with grass. Everything grows in an extraordinary fashion. The vegetables, such as cabbages, lettuce, salad greens, radishes, and other similar plants, ripen within 16 days, while pumpkins, melons, cucumbers etc. require but 30 days. Animals brought from Spain, such as oxen, attain a greater size. If anyone chooses to sow wheat in a mountain region exposed to the cold, it flourishes wonderfully, but less so in the plain, because the soil is too fertile. To one unheard-of-thing people have sworn; that the ears are as thick round as a man's arm and one palm in length, and that some of them contain as many as a thousand grains of wheat.

After listing a series of the island's marketable products such as red wood, mastic, perfumes, green coloring material, cotton and amber, he exclaims, full of exhuberant admiration:

> What greater happiness could one wish in this world than to live in a country where such wonders are to be seen and enjoyed? Is there a more agreeable existence than that one leads in a country where one is not forced to shut himself in narrow rooms to escape cold that chills or heat that suffocates? A land where it is not necessary to load the body with heavy clothing in winter, or to toast one's leg at a continual fire, a practice which ages people in the twinking of the eye, exhausts their force, and provokes a thousand different maladies. The air of Española is stated to be salubrious, and the rivers which flow over beds of gold, wholesome. There are indeed no rivers nor mountains nor very few valleys where gold is not found.[6]

A few months later Peter Martyr's enthusiasm with the island of Española was more unabated than ever, for he wrote:

> There is not a province or a district in it which is not noteworthy for the majesty of its mountains and hills, and in the riverbeds, gold in abundance is found; and in the latter, (also) fish of delicious flavor. . . . Everywhere there is wealth, and gold is everywhere found. . . . Everything thereabouts speaks of happiness. . . . I feel myself carried away by a sort of joyous mental excitement, a kind of Delphic or Sibylline breath, when I read of these things. . . .[7]

Peter Martyr thus clearly shows himself to be a person endowed with a special sensitivity for the beauties, qualities and potentials of the island of Española. As an intelligent and educated humanist, he was capable of realizing better than others the unique advantages offered by the natural environment of Española. His contemporary Spaniards, occupied as they were in gaining and upholding honor, and bound up in the belief of their own worth, may have had less time to be enthusiastic about the qualities of Española. However, an awareness of the qualities of the natural environment of Espanola did not escape them. After all, Peter Martyr's statements on Española were based on the opinion he had formed after reading reports by Spanish settlers living on the island, and after holding personal conversations with those who returned home. We may surmise then that Peter Martyr's image of Española was a reflection of the esteem in which the Spaniards themselves held the island. Furthermore, the image of Española as a blessed and happy island had a solid base in reality. Fernández de Enciso, in his Suma de Geografía, written about 1518, concisely pointed out the economic resources of the island: "A great deal of gold is collected. It is land abundant in meat and fresh fish. The livestock multiplies rapidly. The cows and mares give birth every year. The grass and the trees are constantly green."[8]

Fernández de Oviedo, an "intellectual" of Jewish background,[9] and therefore well equipped to recognize potential sources of wealth, in his Sumario de la Historia natural de las Indias, published in 1526, confirms the evaluations of Peter Martyr and placed Española at the same level of excellency, if not superior, as the islands of Sicily and England, at the time the most renowned islands of Christendom. Here are Oviedo's words:

> I believe beyond any doubt, and this opinion is held by many, that if a prince had no realm except this island, in a short time it would not be inferior to Sicily and England, nor at present is there any reason why either of those islands should be envied. Española is so rich in natural resources that she could enrich many provinces and kingdoms. In addition to having more rich mines and better gold than have yet been discovered in such quantity anywhere in the world, so much cotton (Gossipium barbadense) grows wild that if it were cultivated and cared for, it would become the best and the most productive in the whole world. There are so many excellent drumstick trees[10] that large quantities of the pods are already

> being brought to Spain, and from Spain they are carried and distributed to many parts of the world. This is increasing so rapidly that it is really a marvel. On that island there are many rich sugar plantations. The sugar is of very good quality and ships loaded with it come to Spain every year. Plants native to Spain that have been transplanted and cultivated there grow better and in larger quantity than in any part of Europe. They grow and multiply in spite of the fact that they are neglected and not cared for. The men want the time they would employ in agriculture for other gains and enterprises that more rapidly swell the wealth of covetous souls who have no desire to work. . . . The cattle as well as other animals have multiplied greatly. Cows have multiplied at such rate that many cattle kings have more than a thousand or two thousand heads, and there are quite a number who have up to three or four thousand heads. The truth is that the land furnishes some of the best pasturage, clear water, and one of the most temperate climates in the world for such cattle. Consequently the animals are larger and more handsome than those of Spain. Likewise, there are many sheep and swine.[11]

In the first part of his Historia general y natural de las Indias, published almost a decade later (1535) than his Sumario, Oviedo takes pride again in maintaining defiantly the superiority of Española over England and Sicily. This time, however, he recognizes that:

> Española cannot compete with England in powerful kings, princes, barons and noble and warlike people; nor does she have the two excellent archbishoprics and the many bishoprics that ennoble England; she is also inferior in the number of cities, towns, provinces and dukedoms. Neither can Española compete with Sicily in the antiquity and nobility of the towns, or in illustrious lineages and aristocratic families or with Sicily's enviable situation in the heart of Europe.[12]

Thus, a gradual change in resource perception is taking place in his mind. Oviedo admits the superiority of England and Sicily in these respects, but considers these differences to be the natural result of the fact that Española had been up until recently in the hands of savages and barbarians, "people in whom the good common sense of the

Europeans is absent." With the arrival of the Spaniards, the situation has been radically changed, and since then, "thanks to the diligence and virtue of the Castilians, the island is becoming ever more noble."[13]

But, the Castilians who through their "virtue" and "diligence" contribute so much to the ennoblement of Española are the very same ones who proved unable to create lasting economic prosperity on the island. There is evidence to demonstrate that real economic prosperity -- if it ever existed in Española after the arrival of the Spaniards -- did not last long. Already in 1519 Licenciate Figueroa found the island in a desperate plight, with only 1,000 colonists, most of them disgusted with their lot and the Indians rapidly declining in numbers.[14] In 1520 Peter Martyr was writing that "although there are rich gold deposits, mining has been almost abandoned for want of miners; for the natives, on whose labor the work depends, have been reduced to a very small number."[15] A few years later Oviedo wrote that the island was being deserted for "many Spaniards have returned to Spain and others have migrated to other islands or to Tierra Firme, Mexico or Peru."[16]

Had Oviedo noticed the paradoxical aspect of this situation? Probably not to the extent that we do today. However, he appears to have been well aware of the destructive character of the activities of many Spaniards whom he called "destroyers and squanderers of new lands."[17] "If Española does not generate certain products", Oviedo remarked, "it is not because the land is lacking in resources, but rather because the Spaniards overlook the production of them and do not seem to care." And he continues:

> . . . such is the case with those plants and seeds which were brought over from Spain and have failed to multiply on this island; men do not have the

> patience to wait for a harvest; instead they seek for ways in which they may become rich faster. This is especially the case with those who arrive in these parts with the thought of raping the land and returning home soon, and have no intention of establishing themselves here. And so it is that none or very few are willing to employ themselves in sowing grain, or in planting vineyards, for the majority of the men who are here regard this land as a stepmother, in spite of the fact that many of them have become better off with her than with their own mother.[18]

Such then was the state of affairs in Española. In spite of the fact that the island repeatedly won praise for its excellent climate, the fertility and productivity of its soil and its wealth in gold, few Spaniards became attached to, much less rooted in, the new land. The Spaniards of Española gave proof of little interest in the development of agriculture; the greater part of their energies was spent in the search for gold, which, if rewarding, would permit them to amass a fortune rapidly, and return to Castile. Oviedo was aware of all this and his message is clear: Española is rich and fertile; if the island is not prosperous and wealthy it is the fault of the Spaniards, who do not seem to care about the development of its natural resources.

The Perception and Evaluation of the Natives

The Spaniards accompanying Columbus in his first voyages of exploration (see Figure 13) had seen in the natives of the Caribbean a race of simple, hospitable, innocent and submissive people. When the Spaniards became established on the island, however, they began to look at the natives in a different light. Why this change took place is easy enough to understand. When the circumstances in which the perceiver found himself changed, perceptions were automatically modified to adjust and adapt to the new situation that had originated. The Spanish settlers were no longer visitors on the islands. With their establishment they had realized that their well-being depended primarily on the natives. The latter were perceived more and more as the means through which one could grow rich and live as a feudal lord. The encomienda system that had been implanted was based heavily on the assumption that the Spaniards, who thought themselves superior and more virtuous than the natives, had the right to demand from the Indians submission, obedience, tributes and services. As the assumption of this right by the Spaniards was contrary to the status of "free vassals" which the Indians had been granted by the Crown since the beginning of the conquest, it became necessary to devise arguments which would serve to prove that freedom and servitude were not incompatible.

In 1512, Fray Bernardino de Mesa, one of King Ferdinand's preachers, presented before the Council of the Indies a thesis in which he proved dialectically that, although the Indians were free beings, yet idleness was one of the greatest evils from which they suffered, and hence something had to be done to help the Indians to overcome it. This tendency to idle away time made absolute liberty injurious to them. Moreover, they were naturally unstable, and of imperfect understanding and capacity. De Mesa therefore concluded that some kind of servitude was necessary "to curb their vicious inclinations and compel them to industry." Fray Bernardino believed in the possibility that the "constitution" of the lands and regions inhabited by the Indians had made of them serfs "a natura":

> There are places where the aspect of the skies under which they are situated creates people of servile natures and these lands are destined to

> be governed through some kind of servitude; this is what happens in France, Normandie and parts of the Delphinate where its people are very much ruled as if they were serfs by nature.[19]

Another royal preacher, the Licenciate Gregorio, drew similar conclusions with learned quotations from Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas. Following Thomas Aquinas (Regimine Principum, Book 3, Chapter 11) he signaled the fact that "there are two kinds of government, one is political in character and the other despotic." This latter was fitting where "due to the wickedness and barbarous disposition of the people, they may and should, be ruled as if they were serfs." And, following Aristotle (De Republica, Book 1, tit. 2, Chapter 2) "seigneurial rule is just when made on those that are barbarous and serfs 'a natura'". From these citations Licenciate Gregorio concluded that the Indians could rightfully be ruled as if they were serfs, for they were, by their natures, barbarous and stupid. And he further specifies:

> The Indians can be considered free vassals in the sense that they cannot be sold, or forbidden the possession of things; and so, whatever their natures, they cannot be called serfs, although, for their own benefit, they must be ruled assuming in them a certain measure of servitude, which should not be such as to make of them absolute serfs, nor so light as to cause an excess of liberty which would prove harmful to them.[20]

The opinions of the settlers of Española were not at variance with those expressed by Fray Bernardino de Mesa and Licenciate Gregorio. When, in 1517, under the instigation of Las Casas and other defenders of the rights of the Indians, an official enquiry was carried out in order to establish whether the natives of the island had the capacity to live in freedom, all the settlers agreed they were incapable of it. The consensus of opinion among the settlers was well expressed by one Antonio de Villasante, a resident of Española since 1493 and quite familiar with the Indian customs and languages, who declared that if allowed to run free the Indians would revert to their former habits of idleness, drunkenness, improvidence, gluttony, dancing, and would patronize witch doctors and eat spiders and snakes.[21]

Eight years later the Dominican Tomás Ortiz, in a speech delivered before the Council of the Indies, expressed an opinion on the Indians of Chiribichi, in the province of Paria[22], with which many of the Spanish settlers of Española would have tended to agree. On that occasion Fray Tomás declared that:

> On the mainland they eat human flesh. They are more given to sodomy than any other nation. There is no justice among them. They go naked. They have no respect either for love or for virginity. They are stupid and silly. They have no respect for truth, save when it is to their advantage. They are unstable. They have no knowledge of what foresight means. They are ungrateful and unchangeable. They boast of intoxicating themselves with drinks they manufacture from certain herbs, fruits and grains, similar to our beers and ciders. They are vain of the products they harvest and eat. They are brutal. They delight in exaggerating their defects. There is no obedience among them, or deference on the part of the young for the old, nor of the son for the father. They are incapable of learning. Punishments have no effects upon them. Traitorous, cruel and vindictive, they never forgive. Most hostile to religion, idle, dishonest, abject and vile, in their judgements they keep no faith or law. Husbands observe no fidelity towards their wives, nor the wives towards their husbands. Liars, superstitious, and cowardly as hares, they eat fleas, spiders, and worms raw, whenever they find them. They exercise none of the human arts and industries. When taught the mysteries of our religion, they say that these things may suit Castilians, but not them, and they do not wish to change their customs. They are beardless, and if sometimes hairs grow, they pull them out. They have no sympathy with the sick, and if one of them is gravely ill, his friends and

> neighbors carry him out into the mountains to die there. Putting a little water beside his head they go away. The older they get the worse they become. About the age of ten or twelve years, they seem to have some civilization, but later they become like beasts. I may therefore affirm that God has never created a race more full of vice and composed without the least mixture of kindness or culture.[23]

Fernández de Oviedo's perception of the natives of Española matches well Fray Tomás Ortiz's opinion on the Indians of the coast of Paria. In physical appearance the natives of Española were described by Oviedo as:

> Somewhat smaller than Spaniards and well built and proportioned except for their having wide foreheads, the openings of the nose very large and the white of the eyes rather turbid. . . . There are among the women some of good appearance. Both men and women have very nice hair, very black, straight and thin. Their teeth are not good.[24]

But it is when judging the character and customs of the Indians that Oviedo displays a hard criticism. "These people -- he writes --

> are naturally lazy and vicious, melancholy, cowardly, villainous, lying and shiftless, of little memory and of no perseverance. To escape work many of them went so far as to commit suicide, drinking poison or hanging themselves with their own hands. . . . Sodomites are to be found among them and, aside from this, they are all idolatrous and have many vices and of such an ugly and vicious nature that one cannot listen to them without feeling shame and repugnance nor can I describe them so numerous and obscene they are. Furthermore, they are most ungrateful and have little memory and still less mental capacity. If there exists in them some good qualities it is only while they are children, for as soon as they enter adolescence they suffer from so many sins and vices that the majority of them become abominable. . They are not good for much and die easily, or they leave and take off for the mountains; for their chief desire, and what they more indulged in before the arrival of the Spaniards, is to eat, drink, be idle, lust, worship heathen idols and commit many other bestial obscenities. . There is no hope that they will learn quickly the Catholic faith, for their understanding is inclined to beastly passions and vice, as seems to be reflected in their heads, which are different from those of other people,

> the skulls being so thick and hard that the Spaniards had to take care in fighting not to strike on the head lest their swords be blunted. For these reasons very few are those among them who persevere in the faith, but rather, they slide from it as hail does from the tips of the spears. . . .[25]

Finally, and what is considered by Oviedo to be important:

> These Indians lack a good idea of what truth and honor is, nor do they grasp the circumstances in which truth must be observed and honor upheld.[26] Neither do they experience discredits and affronts with the feeling of grief and outrage with which other nations experience them.[27]

That Oviedo's perception of the Indians shared much in common with the views that other Spaniards held on the natives is confirmed by Las Casas who comments in his Historia de las Indias: "All the world over the Indians have been defamed by the Spaniards who talk about them as if they were brute beasts."[28]

Las Casas himself, on the other hand, held views on the natives of the New World that, in many respects, were radically opposed to those held by Oviedo. What Oviedo interpreted as inexcusable faults and debasing vices were seen by him as distinct proofs of the good nature and character of the Indians. For Las Casas the natives of Española were: "the mildest, and humblest of people and, in their patience, comparable to none."[29] How he perceived the character of the New World Indian can be deduced from his following words:

> God created these people without evil and without guile. They are most obedient and faithful to their natural lords and to the Christians whom they serve. They are most submissive, patient, peaceful and virtuous. Nor are they quarrelsome, rancorous, querulous, or vengeful. Moreover, they are more delicate than princes and die easily from work or illness. They neither possess nor desire to possess worldly wealth. Surely these people would be the most blessed in the world if only they worshipped the true God.[30]

Furthermore, the Christian virtues of the Indians were not inferior to their intellectual capacities for:

> Thanks to the will of God which disposed it that way, the favorable influence of the skies and the mild disposition of the regions which they inhabit have given these people an understanding which is naturally very sharp, clever, clean and able. To this have also contributed the perfect arrangement of their members and exterior and interior senses, the quality and soberness of their meals, the good and healthy disposition of the lands and regions and local airs, their moderation in eating and drinking habits, the tranquility, calmness and quietness of their sensual affections and their lack of desire for possessing worldly things.

In summary, Las Casas contended that the Indians were in many respects superior to the ancient people of Rome and Greece, surpassing "the English and the French and even some of the people of our own Spain."[31]

The perception of the Indians by Las Casas -- as is the case with all kind of perceptions -- had been influenced by a series of beliefs and attitudes towards the world and life which, manifesting themselves in a series of desires and aspirations, gave things their being and significance. Las Casas was an uncompromising enemy of the encomienda; an institution which he considered unjust and aimed at the tyrannization of the Indians and their subjection to the cruelty and greed of the Spaniards. To liberate the Indians from the control of the encomenderos Las Casas found it necessary to demonstrate that the natives were not the inferior and vicious beings that the Spaniards supposed them to be. His life and actions were dominated by a strong desire to prove that the Indian was a human being worthy of the same considerations as a Spaniard. It was this aspiration that influenced to a great degree, Las Casas' perception of the natives of the New World and, in this way, contributed to create an image which endowed the Indian with all kinds of desirable virtues and good qualities.

Las Casas' Plan for the Economic Development of Española

By moving the Christian consciences of many influential Spaniards at Court, Las Casas was able to secure support from the Crown to allow him to put into practice some of his own ideas on how the christianization of the Indians and the colonization of the New World should be carried out. In the following, we will briefly examine some of the plans Las Casas had in mind for the island of Española. These plans serve to indicate the way he viewed the development of the sources of wealth of the island.

Las Casas believed that the encomienda system was undesirable from a humane, moral, ethical, and even economic point of view. Accordingly, he soon started devising plans which would allow for the substitution of this institution by a more just and advantageous colonization scheme. In a document presented to the King in 1517, Las Casas recommended that the Indians of Española should not be distributed among individual Spaniards. Instead, a community of Indians should be established in each town and city of the Spaniards. In these communities the Indians would be held and required to work in common, and be governed by wage-earning employees according to certain rules and regulations. Spanish farmers with their wives and children would be sent from Spain to live in each town as permanent residents. Each farmer would be given five Indians with their families to live under his tutelage. They would work together and share the profits in a brotherly way. Thus would the Indians prosper and learn, rather than die under the tyranny of the encomenderos. The Indians would want to work when they saw the Spaniards working, and their sons and daughters would intermarry. "Thus", Las Casas says,

> will the land be made fruitful and its people multiply, because they will plant all manner of trees and vegetables; Your Majesty's revenues will be increased, the islands will be ennobled and become, therefore, the best, the richest in the world.[32]

Although the final draft of this plan was not approved by the Royal Council, the Crown, nevertheless, was persuaded by Las Casas and other defenders of the rights of the Indians to take steps towards revoking encomiendas and granting freedom to the natives. The Jeronymite monks, governors of Española from 1516 to 1519, made an unsuccessful attempt in this direction. Their successor, Rodrigo de Figueroa, was given specific instructions to free the Indians "with all convenient speed". On his arrival in Española in 1519, he entered into consultation with the Jeronymites, Franciscans, Dominicans, the officials and colonists, and found the general opinion solidly against Indian liberty. In spite of this he carried out some experiments to see if the Indians could live in freedom as "reasonable" men. He collected a number of natives in three villages and placed them under the supervision of Spanish administrators. The experiment, however, failed: The Spanish administrators showed little interest in teaching the Indians agriculture, the mining of gold and the organization of work, while the natives, on their side, were uninterested in learning these things.[33]

The lack of success which these projects met was to be expected in view of the overwhelming opposition from the settlers of Española to all those schemes which were aimed at taking the Indians away from them. Las Casas, the main promotor of these plans, became the prime enemy of the settlers, who began to think of him as a "destroyer of hidalgos" and an "enemy of the Spanish nation".[34]

The attempts made by Las Casas to bring Spanish farmers to the New World also ended in failure. Once in the Indies, the men who had been farmers in Spain lost interest in their professions and adopted the way of life of the Spaniards living in the New World. This reaction is not difficult to understand if we bear in mind that the Spanish peasant never felt a strong attraction to the cultivation of the soil and lacked any love or attachment to a piece of land which he worked. In the depth of his heart he sheltered the hope of gaining hidalguia and nobility and he saw in the Indies a field offering opportunities to fulfill his aspirations. One contemporary historian, Pedro Gutiérrez de Santa Clara, commented with certain irony that, before departing for the New World, the farmers of one of the crews assembled by Las Casas at Seville,

> had forgotten their spades and their cows, and began to fancy themselves as gentlemen, especially on Sundays and holidays, when they sallied forth with many feathers in their colored caps, and the Reverend Father (Las Casas) in their midst.

And, he adds:

> At last they all embarked from Seville, together with their women and many effects which they considered convenient to bring along: many biscuits, much wine and hams, as well as many other gifts of one kind or another, all at the expense of His Majesty.[35]

As for the sixty farmers who, thanks to the efforts of Las Casas, left Spain for the island of Española in 1533, Oviedo informs us that after their arrival:

> They went to settle in one of the more fertile parts of this island and near the gold mines, in a village that was abandoned when the Indians who served the settlers became extinct. They were thinking of rebuilding it and making their living there as farmers and cattle ranchers. But the colony did not survive long, for everybody left when news arrived of the riches of Peru.

And Oviedo adds the critical comment:

> Not being satisfied with their state and manner of living they preferred to die surrounded by greater wants. . . . And such other among them, to the smell of the name of Captain, left his artisan's trade with which he earned enough to live, and lost what he had acquired. . . .[36]

NOTES

[1] Historia de las Indías, Book 2, Chapter 41.

[2] Ibidem, First Decade, Book 10.

[3] Ibidem, Third Decade, Book 10.

[4] Ibidem, Third Decade, Book 6.

[5] In 1516 Española was sending between four and five hundred thousand gold ducats to Spain (P. Martyr, Third Decade, Book 8).

[6] Ibidem, Third Decade, Book 7.

[7] Ibidem, Third Decade, Book 8.

[8] op. cit. p. 208.

[9] His grandparents forsook Judaism for Christianity. Oviedo's grandfather was private secretary of King Henry IV of Castile.

[10] Cañafístula, the drumstick tree (Cassia fistula) an East Indian leguminous tree brought to the New World by the Spaniards. The juice of the seed of the pods was widely used in medicine as a mild laxative.

[11] We have used here the English translation of the Sumario: The Natural History of the West Indies, edited and translated by Sterling A. Stoudemire, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1959, pp. 9, 10, 11.

[12] P. Martyr, Book 3, Chapter 11.

[13] Ibidem.

[14] L. Hanke, The Spanish Struggle for Justice in the Conquest of America; Boston, Little, Brown and Co., 1965, p. 46.

[15] P. Martyr, Fourth Decade, Book 10.

[16] Tierra Firme, "Land of Solid Ground", The name given by the Spaniards to the continental mass, the mainland, in opposition to the islands. Most frequently the term was used to designate the northern part of the South American litoral. Historia general. . . , Book 3, Chapter 10.

[17] Ibidem, Book 30, Chapter 1.

[18] Ibidem, Book 3, Chapter 11.

[19] Las Casas, Historia de las Indias, Book 3, Chapter 9.

[20] Ibidem, Book 3, Chapter 12.

[21] L. Hanke, The Spanish Struggle. . . , p. 44.

[22] In Venezuela.

[23] Related by Peter Martyr, Eighth Decade, Book 8.

[24] *Historia general. . .* , Book 3, Chapter 5.

[25] This estimate has been compiled from Oviedo's remarks in his *Historia general. . .*: Book 3, Chapter 6; Book 4, Chapter 4; Book 5, Proemio; Book 2, Chapter 7.

[26] The Spanish sentence goes: ". . . no son gente puesta en los primores de la verdad e honra e circunstancias de ella. . ."

[27] Ibidem, Book 5, Chapter 8.

[28] Book 2, Chapter 1. This statement does not mean that the Spaniards excluded the Indians from mankind. The denomination of "beasts", when applied to the Indians, was not understood by the Spaniards in the full and philosophic sense of the word. The same applies to the epithet of "perro" (dog) given sometimes to the Indians, and which represented an adaptation of the "perro moro", a vituperative phrase commonly applied in Spain to Moslems. (See O'Gorman, "Sobre la naturaleza bestial del indio americano," *Filosofía y Letras*, Mexico, 1941, n. 1, pp. 141-158; n. 2, pp. 305-313).

[29] *Historia de las Indias*, Book 1, Chapter 1.

[30] *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias*, in *Tratados de Fray Bartolomé de las Casas*; Buenos Aires and Mexico, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1965, vol. 1, pp. 15 and 17.

[31] *Apologética historia sumaria*, Book 3, Chapter 263.

[32] *Colección de documentos inéditos de América*, vol. 7, p. 14-65. Discussed by L. Hanke, *The Spanish Struggle. . .* , pp. 56-58.

[33] Ibidem, pp. 45-47.

[34] Bartolomé de las Casas, *Historia de las Indias*, Book 3, Chapter 147.

[35] Pedro Gutiérrez de Santa Clara, *Historia de las Guerras civiles del Perú*, I: 36-40. Cited in L. Hanke, *The Spanish Struggle. .* , p. 66.

[36] *Historia general. . .* , Book 5, Chapter 9.

CHAPTER IX

THE EARLY SIXTEENTH CENTURY SPANIARD'S IMAGE OF NEW SPAIN

When looking at the way the early sixteenth century Spaniards perceived and evaluated the biophysical environment and the natives of New Spain we can recognize a pattern which bears strong similarities with the one that has been made discernible for Española. Like Española, New Spain was highly praised, being perceived as a land of great natural fertility abounding in precious metals. The natives were also assumed to be men of inferior qualities, destined to serve the superior Spaniards. This time, however, disdain would be first mingled with admiration as the Spaniards could not fail to notice the high degree of civilization and culture attained by many of the Indian groups of New Spain.

As in the case of Española, we find the paradoxical situation that the Spaniards, while praising the fertility and agricultural productive capacity of the soil, did not feel a great inclination to directly control and manage, even less exploit or develop, these resources, but rather aspired above all to exercise seigneury over the Indians, to gain honor and to make a fortune quickly by mining or acquiring precious metals. Some of the evidence which serves to support these statements will be reviewed briefly.

The Perception and Evaluation of the Natural Environment

Hernán Cortés, in his Second letter to Charles V explains why he had chosen the name of New Spain for the new territories:

> From what I have seen and noted as to the similarity which the whole of this country bears to Spain, in fertility, size and the cold, as well as in many other things in which they resemble one another, it seemed to me that the most suitable name for this land would be New Spain, and so it was duly christened in the name of Your Royal Majesty. I humbly beg your Majesty to approve this and order that it be so named.[1]

From these words it is apparent that Cortés had found the new territories to be so excellent that no name would fit them better than New Spain. It was partly by using this stratagem that Cortés wanted to call the attention of the Emperor to the fact that the lands he had discovered were not much inferior to Spain itself and, as such, well merited his Majesty's interests and concerns. As he explains in the same letter:

> For I am desirous that your Majesty should know of matters concerning this land, which is so great and marvellous that, as I wrote in my first letter, your Majesty may well call himself Emperor of it with no less reason and title than he now does of Germany, which by the grace of God your Majesty possesses.[2]

Cortés was not the only one who saw similarities between the land he wanted to call New Spain and the home country. Some of his companion members of the Judicial Council of the recently found Rica Villa of Vera Cruz had noticed that:

> All kind of hunting is to be met with in this land and both birds and beasts similar to those we have in Spain, such as deer, both red and fallow, wolves, foxes, partridges, pigeons, turtle doves of several kinds, quails, hares and rabbits: so that in the matter of birds and beasts there is no great difference between this land and Spain.[3]

The Anonymous Conqueror shares the same opinion: "The land of New Spain is similar to Spain and the hills, valleys and plains are nearly of the same manner, except that the mountains are more terrible and rugged. ."[4]

As for the natural qualities of the new land, the Anonymous Conqueror states as follows:

> There are in this province of New Spain great rivers and springs of very good sweet water, extensive woods on the hills and plains of very high pines, cedars, oaks and cypresses, besides live oaks and a great variety of mountain trees. Mines have been found of gold, silver, copper, tin, steel and iron.[5] There are many kind of fruits similar to those of Spain in appearance, although to taste them they have neither the same perfection of flavor nor of color. It is quite true that many are excellent, and as good as those of Spain could be, but this is not generally the case. The fields are most pleasant and full of a most beautiful herbage that grows to the height of the middle of the leg. The soil is very fertile and abundant, producing everything sown in it, and in many places gives two or even three crops a year.[6]

The Franciscan Toribio de Motolinía, writing before 1541, sees also in New Spain a land of great fertility:

> Such is the productivity and so great the wealth and fertility of this land of New Spain that it is beyond belief. . . . In the upland country, with what it originally had and what has been brought from Spain and can be produced and raised here, there is material enough to supply with fruit all of Asia, Africa and Europe; wherefore this may be called another New World.[7]

Before Motolinía's arrival in the New World, the Spaniards of Cortés had perceived New Spain not only as a fertile country with bio-physical characteristics similar to those of Spain, but also and above all as a region endowed with an abundant wealth of precious metals. They wrote to the Emperor:

> To our mind it is probable that this land contains as many riches as that from which Solomon is said to have obtained the gold for the temple. . . , but so little time has passed since our landing that we have been unable to explore the country further

than five leagues inland.[8]

It becomes apparent, then, that for the Spaniards of Cortés very little factual evidence sufficed to confirm them in their preconceived beliefs; beliefs which, in their turn, had been subconsciously adjusted to a series of wishes, desires and aspirations. Like his companions, Cortés was always on the look-out for exotic lands full of riches. After the conquest of Mexico, he managed to get information "of a sea lying to the south, and in some places not more than twelve, thirteen or fourteen days march distance", in which news he rejoiced greatly, for he was familiar with the "common opinion of learned men that islands rich in gold, pearls, precious stones and spices, together with many other secrets and marvellous things are to be found there . . ."[9] Pedro de Alvarado, one of Cortés' captains, was informed that the lord of Tututepec -- a province thirty leagues to the south of Oaxaca, close to the sea -- possessed great treasures and the land around was very rich in gold mines.[10] Near the province of Colimán, Cortes did not doubt that "there was an island very rich in pearls and gold."[11]

After the conquest of Mexico was completed, the conquerors were still possessed by a strong desire to find regions rich in gold. Many of them decided that there was something better to do than to settle down quietly and enjoy the fruits of victory in the form of a good encomienda. As Bernal Díaz del Castillo explains:

> Learning from Moctezúma's account-books the names of the places which sent him tributes of gold, and where the mines and chocolate and cotton cloths were to be found, we decided to go to these places; and our resolve was strengthened when we saw so eminent a captain and so close a friend of Cortés as Gonzalo de Sandóval leaving Mexico, and when we

> realized that there were no gold or mines or cotton in the town around Mexico, only a lot of maize and the maguey plantations from which they obtained their wine. For this reason we thought of it as a poor land, and went off to colonize other provinces. But we were thoroughly deceived.[12]

The conquerors of Mexico, then, did not put great value upon agricultural wealth. They lacked a feeling of attachment to the land they had conquered with so much sweat and blood. Instead, they strived after doing yet greater things, finding more rich and fabulous kingdoms. The search for gold became ubiquitous, for no one could live as an hidalgo or noble if he was lacking in means. Las Casas was referring to this general craving for gold when he remarked:

> All are occupied in that damned exercise of searching after gold, and not in making the earth bear fruit for the production of natural wealth.[13]

Peter Martyr, in 1521, expressed similar views on the subject:

> It is only the frantic craving for gold that goads the Spaniards on. Everything else, no matter how useful or valuable, is neglected and despised as of no consequence.[14]

And Cortés, commenting in one of his letters to the Emperor on certain decrees he had proclaimed in his Majesty's name, declared:

> With some of them the Spaniards of these lands are not very pleased, especially with those which recommend them to settle and straightway take root on the land. For all or the greater number of them have notions of using these lands as they used towards the Islands before them, that is to say, impoverishing them, destroying them, and then abandoning them.[15]

The Perception and Evaluation of the Natives

We possess at least six eyewitness accounts of the conquest of

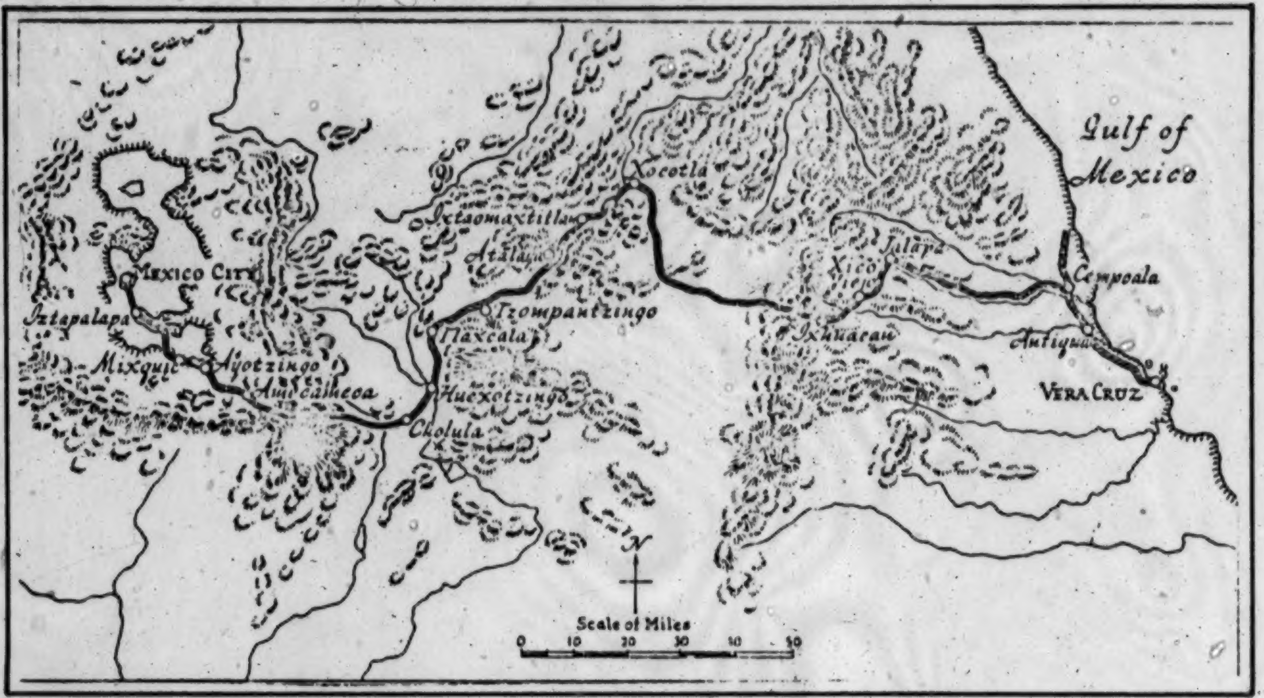
Mexico. Three of these accounts -- the "Relaciones" of Andrés de Tapia, Francisco de Aguilar, and Bernardino Vázquez de Tapia -- are essentially recitals of military events offering little description or assessment of Indian civilization. Of more interest for our present concerns are the account of the Anonymous Conqueror, which contains a summary of Aztec institutions and customs; the "Cartas de Relación" sent by Cortés to Charles V; and the "Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España" by Bernal Díaz del Castillo.

The Second Letter of Cortés gives a detailed account of the things the Spaniards saw on the march from the coast to Tenochtitlan (see Figure 15). Having left the coastal province of Cempoala, the Spanish army ascended the sierra and entered the independent state of Tlaxcala. Cortés was quite favorably impressed by the city of Tlaxcala of which he said:

> The city is indeed so great and marvellous that though I abstain from describing many things about it, yet the little that I shall recount is, I think, almost incredible. It is much larger than Granada and much better fortified. Its houses are as fine and its inhabitants far more numerous than those of Granada when that city was captured.

The city displayed all the comforts and refinements of European life, including barbershops and bathhouses and its market was exceptional. "Finally," Cortes concludes his description, "good order and an efficient police system are maintained among them, and they behave as people of sense and reason: the foremost city of Africa cannot rival them."[16]

From Tlaxcala the Spaniards marched to the city of Cholula. About the latter Cortes declared:


Gulf of Mexico
Cempoala
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VERA CRUZ
Jalapa
Xico
Ixhuacan
Xocotla
Ixtaomaxtitlan
Atlala
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Tlaxcala
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Cholula
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Mexico City
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50

Figure 15. Route of Cortes from Veracruz to Mexico.
Source: A.C. Wilgus, Historical Atlas of Latin America, p. 62.

> the city is very fertile, with many small holdings, for there is an abundance of land which is for the most part well irrigated, and indeed its exterior is as fine as any in Spain. . . .[17]

On the shores of Lake Texcoco lay the city of Iztapalapan (Figure 16). Cortes found its ruler's houses "as fine as the best in Spain." He described with admiration the city's "refreshing gardens with many trees and sweet-scented flowers", the bathing places of fresh water, and the botanical and zoological garden which was stocked with many kinds of fish and fowl.[18]

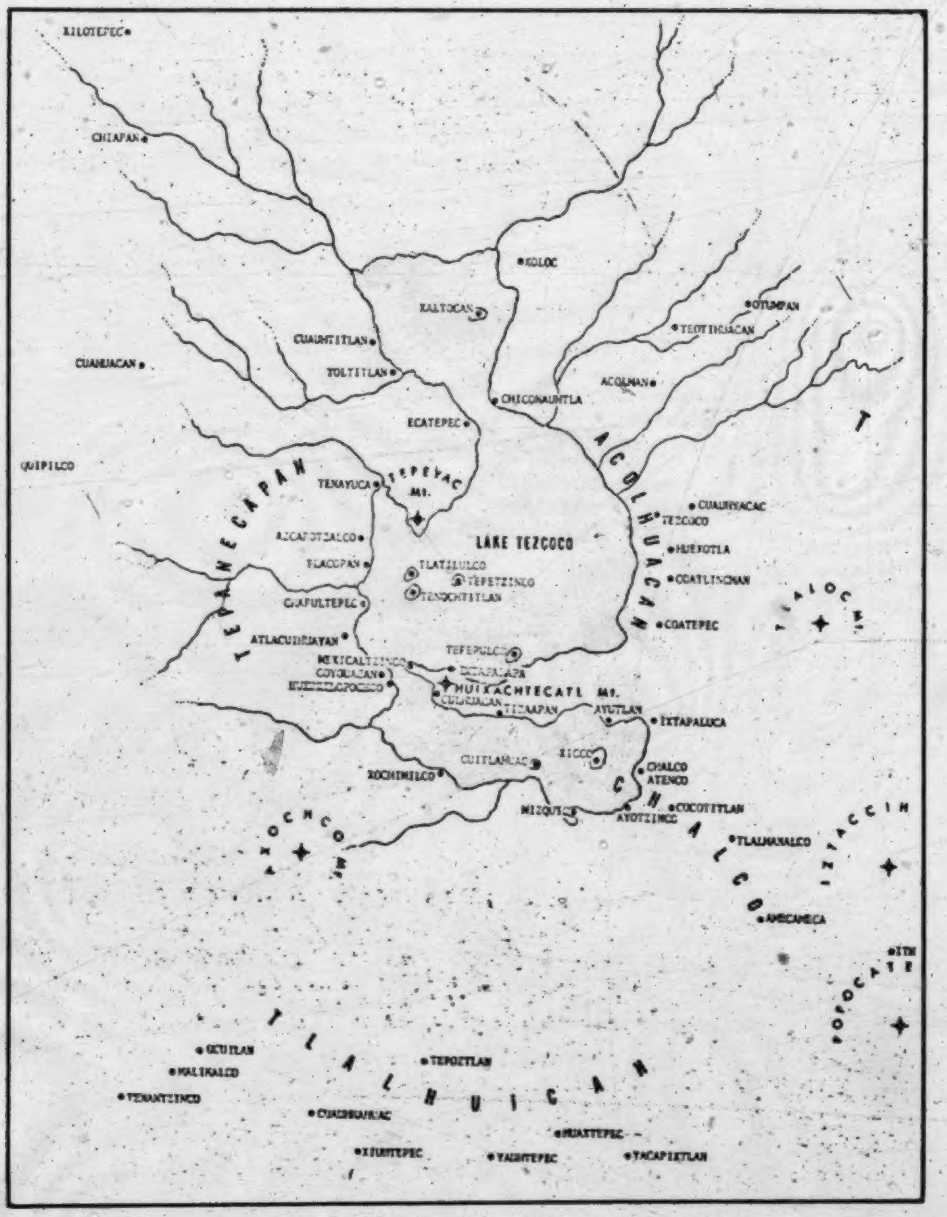
But it was at the sight of Tenochtitlan that the admiration of Cortés reached its peak:

> I know very well that what I shall say, although imperfectly told, will appear so wonderful that it will hardly seem credible, for even we, who see with our own eyes the things I describe, are unable to comprehend their reality.

Among all the admirable things of this city was its market square "twice as large as that of Salamanca" which greatly impressed Cortés with its immense activity and display of material wealth, all under the careful supervision of special officers. "The objects of gold and silver," says Cortés,

> are so like to nature that there is not a silversmith in the world who could do better; and as for the stones, there is no imagination which can divine the instruments with which they were so perfectly executed; and as concerns the featherwork, neither in wax nor in embroidery could nature be so miraculously imitated.

The residences of Moctezuma were so marvellous that "it is almost impossible to speak of their excellency and grandeur."[19] Cortés expresses also admiration for the political and social institutions of the Aztecs. He found the manners and morals of many Spanish prelates less


XILOTEPEC
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TEPETZINCO
TENOCHTITLAN
CHAPULTEPEC
ATLACUIHUAYAN
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OCUILAN
MALINALCO
TENANTZINCO
TEPOZTLAN
CUAUHNAHUAC
HUAXTEPEC
XIUHTEPEC
YAUHTEPEC
YACAPIXTLAN

Figure 16. The Valley of Mexico at the Time of the Arrival of the Spaniards.

Source: B.C. Brundage, A Rain of Darts: The Mexican Aztecs commendable than the behavior of Aztec priests. He accused the former of "disposing of the gifts of the Church, wasting them in pomps and other vices, leaving family states for their children", whereas the latter "were so strict in composure and honesty, and also in chastity, that if one was discovered violating his vows, he was punished with death." Cortés concludes his description of Tenochtitlan with the remark that:

> . . . the manner of life among its people is very similar to that of Spain, and considering that this is a barbarous nation, shut off from a knowledge of the true God or communication with enlightened nations, one may well marvel at the orderliness and good government which is everywhere maintained.[20]

In the Third and Fourth letters of Cortés we find further evidence of favorable judgements on the natives and their culture. The Mexicans are found to be "cunning and fierce in warfare." The warriors of Tlaxcala "were, for Indians, a very fine body of men." The city of Tenochtitlan was "one of the more beautiful sights in the world." The natives "showed great industry in tilling the land and planting trees." Cortés considers the natives of New Spain as having "more capacity than those of the other islands" and even of "as much understanding and intelligence as a person needs to be moderately capable."[21]

Like Cortés, Bernal Díaz also expressed admiration with many aspects of Indian culture and character. He praised the intelligence of the ambassadors of Moctezuma, Tendile and Pitalpitoque. At the sight of the town of Cempoala, in the state of Veracruz, he relates:

> . . . we were struck with admiration. It looked like a garden with luxuriant vegetation and the streets were so full of men and women who had come

> to see us, that we gave thanks to God at having discovered such a country.

In Tlaxcala, Bernal Díaz relates that the caciques offered the Spaniards "five beautiful Indian maidens", adding the comment: "and for Indians they were very good looking and well adorned." The deep impression that the sight of the Aztec capital and the cities of the lake made on Bernal Díaz and his companions is apparent from his following words:

> . . . when we saw so many cities and villages built in the water and other great towns on dry lands, and that straight and level causeway going towards Mexico, we were amazed and said that it was like the enchantment they tell of in the legend of Amadis, on account of the great towers and cues and buildings rising from the water and all built of masonry. And some of our soldiers even asked whether the things that we saw were not a dream. It is not to be wondered at that I here write it down in this manner, for there is so much to think over that I do not know how to describe it, seeing things as we did that had never been heard of or seen before, not even dreamed about. . . I say again that I stood looking at it and thought that never in the world would there be discovered other lands such as these.[22]

Bernal Díaz also praises highly the military valor of the Mexican people. He records that, during the siege of Tenochtitlan,

> . . . some three or four soldiers who were there with us and who had served in Italy swore to God many times that they had never seen such fierce fights, not even when they had taken part in such between Christians and against the artillery of the King of France, or of the great Turk, nor had they seen men like those Indians with such courage in closing up their ranks.[23]

The Aztecs are portrayed in especially favorable terms by the Anonymous Conqueror:

> The people of this land are well made, rather tall than short. They are swarthy as leopards, of good manners and gestures, for the greater

> part very skillful, robust and tireless, and at the same time the most moderate men known. They are very warlike and face death with great resolution. . . It is one of the finest things in the world to see them in war in their squadrons, because they move with perfect order, and are splendidly attired, and make such a fine appearance that nothing could be better. Among them are very resolute men who affront death with determination. I saw one of them defending himself most valiantly against two light-horsemen and another against three or four. . . They wear nothing on the head, but they allow the hair to grow long, which is very beautiful, so that with their costume and the long and loose locks which cover the back they look beautiful. . . They are very skillful with their hands for every kind of thing, and of the greatest ingenuity and industry in the world. There are among them masters of occupations, and to make anything they only need to see it made once or twice. . . There was such justice among them that for the least crime or dereliction that anyone committed, he was put to death or reduced to slavery. . . They are of all whom God had created the most devoted to their religion and observant of it, in so much as they offer themselves as voluntary sacrifices for the salvation of their souls.[24]

Like Cortés and Bernal Díaz, the Anonymous Conqueror is overcome with admiration at the great size and population of the towns, the majesty and number of temples and royal houses, and the fabulous markets where all kinds of imaginable merchandise were sold.

However, all the praises the Spaniards gave to the Indians and their civilization were made under the premise that the Indian was inferior to the Spaniard. Inferiority was seen inherent to the Indian nature in such a way that being an Indian meant being deprived of certain virtues and qualities and attitudes towards the world and life which were highly esteemed by the Spaniards and considered essential for a man to have. That the Indians were judged on a premise which already presupposed their inherent inferiority is clear when Cortés says: "*Considering that this is a barbarous nation*, we marvel at the orderliness and good government which is maintained." And, Bernal Díaz: "*For Indians*, the five maidens were good looking." All the intelligence Cortés grants to the Indians of the central plateau is only enough to make them "moderately capable."

The belief in the inherent inferiority of the Indian and its result, the perception of the Indian, in many respects as a deficient being to be subordinated to the Spaniards, were in great part caused by an unconscious desire, an almost "vital necessity" of the Spaniards to see in the Indian a being that, due to his inferiority, could rightfully be subjected to their wills. To confirm the Spaniards in their belief, it sufficed for them to contemplate some of the more gruesome aspects of Indian religion as the practices of human sacrifice and cannibalism. Bernal Díaz speaks with dread about such customs:

> Every day we saw sacrificed before us three, four or five Indians whose hearts were offered to the idols and their blood plastered on the walls, and the feet, arms and legs of the victims were cut off and eaten, just as in our country we eat beef bought from the butcher. I even believe that they sell it by retail in the 'tianguez', as they call their markets.[25]

To the companions of Cortés the human sacrifices of the Indians were "the most terrible and frightful thing ever seen."[26]

Together with human sacrifices and cannibalism, the practice of sodomy was perceived as another proof of the wicked and inferior nature of the Indian. The companions of Cortés believed this custom was general among the Indians of Mexico: "We know and have been informed without room for doubt that all practice the abominable sin of sodomy."[27] The

Spaniards abhorred this custom so much that they did not hesitate in setting the dogs upon, or even burning alive, those among the Indians who were its avowed practitioners.

Drunkenness was seen as the fourth most serious vice affecting the Indians. The Anonymous Conqueror fulminated a condemnation of the Indians of the region of Panuco on account of their habits of drunkenness and sodomy:

> In this province the men are great sodomites, cowards and drunkards; it is almost incredible the length to which they carry their passion for intoxicating fluids: when they can no longer stand and drink, they lie down and have it injected by a squirt into their breech.[28]

But, in spite of these shortcomings, the Spaniards perceived the Indians of New Spain as more civilized and intelligent than those of the Islands:

> . . . with adequate teaching many, perhaps all of them, would very quickly depart from their evil ways and would come to true knowledge, for they live more equally and reasonably than any other of the tribes which we have hitherto come across.[29]

However, though thought to be superior in understanding and civility to other Indians, the natives of Mexico ended up by being assigned similar roles: to work for, pay tribute and serve the "more virtuous" and "knowledgeable" Spaniard. When Cortés, in his Fourth Letter, begs the Emperor to send him plants and seeds of every kind, he takes it as a matter of course that the Indians would charge themselves with cultivating them, for "they show great industry in tilling lands and planting trees."[30] In his Third Letter, Cortés explains why he has decided to approve the establishment of the encomienda system in New Spain in spite of the fact that the natives of the region were of "such understanding and intelligence as would make them moderately capable":

> For I thought that if these services (the services provided by the Indians in encomienda) were abolished, the conquerors and settlers of these parts could not support themselves. . . and in view of the great length of time we have been at war and the necessities and debts that we have all incurred because of it. . . it was almost necessary for me to deposit the chiefs and natives of these parts with the Spaniards -- which I have done with proper consideration for their rank and the services they have rendered your Majesty. . . This step was taken upon the advice of persons who are very experienced in this country. Nothing could have been, and nothing can be, better or more necessary for the support of the Spaniards, as well as for the conservation and good treatment of the Indians. . The best and most important provinces and cities have been reserved for your ~~Majesty~~.[31]

The Emperor, however, was not of the same opinion as Cortés and wrote back absolutely forbidding the continuance of the encomienda. ". . . you will not make any repartimiento or encomienda in that land, or consent to any assignment of the Indians, but you are to allow them to live in liberty, as our vassals in Castile live. ."[32]

But the distribution of the Indians of New Spain was already an accomplished fact when the Emperor's order dropped upon Cortés who, after reading the letter, indicated to the four royal officials who had brought it that he had no intention of executing the order, and then proceeded to write a long letter to the Emperor justifying once again the establishment of the encomienda. As before, the main point of his argument was that if the Indians were taken away from the Spaniards, these would be deprived of their sustenance, for they had no means of support other than those offered through the service and tribute of the Indians. Without their Indians, moreover, the

Spaniards would have to abandon the country and "who would then hold it on behalf of the Emperor?"[33]

Cortés was not exaggerating; when, years later, Bishop Don Sebastián Ramírez de Fuenleal, sent by His Majesty as Reformer of Mexico, began to free the Indians from encomiendas, the historian Oviedo tells us that "many Spaniards abandoned the land and went elsewhere in search of a new life."[34] The oidores of the Second Audiencia of Mexico (1531-1535), ordered by the Crown to suppress some encomiendas, soon lamented the unpleasant nature of the task they had been assigned: "We have encountered a thousand difficulties in suppressing the encomiendas and converting them into corregimientos.[35] We have removed the Indians of more than a hundred persons and we are not giving them to anyone, and this is exciting a universal clamor."[36]

The task of suppressing the encomiendas was indeed a most difficult one. The Spaniards felt a "vital need" to maintain seigneury over the Indians. They were not interested as much in the ownership of land as in holding dominion and power over other men. In 1532, Dr. Ceynos, Oidor of the Audiencia of Mexico, expressed the opinion that, to give lands to the Spaniards without giving them Indians, would not solve the problem, for the Spaniards were "gente puesta en hábito de honra" (people who lived to uphold honor), and consequently could not care less about agriculture.[37] The Franciscans, in a writing of 1544, pointed out the need of having Indians working in the fields and in the industries of the Spaniards for, "if Spaniards were to render services to each other there would be no one willing to do anything."[38] Pedro de Mendoza, Viceroy of New Spain (1535-1550), expressed disgust with the publication of the royal cédula of February 22, 1549,[39] which temporarily abolished the personal services of the Indians for: ". . . who will tend the livestock, who will sow the fields, who will busy himself in raising silk? All the industries which have been started will be ruined."[40] And Oidor Salmerón, in a letter to the Council of the Indies, dated August 13, 1531, makes the following comment:

> Those who do not have encomiendas complain impudently to us and demand something to live on. If told that they are young and well able to work, they answer saucily that they took part in such-and-such a conquest.[41]

In summary then, the encomienda system was based on both the "vital necessity" that every individual Spaniard felt for being served and leading a seigneurial life, and the perception of the Indian as an inferior, born to be subjected to the rule and direction of the "more virtuous" Spaniard. However, while the first conquerors had repeatedly praised the valor, courage, skill and intelligence of the Indians, those Spaniards who arrived after the conquest had been completed saw in the Indians a subjugated people in whom pride was absent and who seemed to adjust well to the role of serving and obeying their Spanish masters. The Franciscan missionary Fray Francisco de Motolinía, for example, points out that "the Indians of New Spain are by nature timid and very bashful so that it seems as if they were born to obey."[42] This statement could not have been made by any of the first conquerors who knew very well the high price in blood and misery they had to pay for the submission of the Indians. But in a few years' time things had changed. In Motolinía's mind the

Indian's timidity of character extended also to all the animals and living creatures of New Spain, and was in strong contrast with the temperament and character of the Spaniards:

> What one can say of these people is that they are temperamentally very different from us, for we Spaniards have a heart that is as big and ardent as fire, and these Indians and all the animals of this land are by nature tame, and because of their timidity and their temperament they are slow to express gratitude, although they are very sensible of benefits. As they are temperamentally more sluggish than we are they are annoying to some Spaniards, but they are capable of any virtue and very capable of learning any trade or craft, and they have a great memory and a good understanding.[43]

Motolinía's view of the natives of New Spain presents two main aspects: on the one hand he discerns in the Indían many of the virtues a good Christian should possess; on the other he sees in their bashfulness and timidity of character a logical reason that serves to explain why they have to serve a people endowed with "more ardent and generous hearts." This dual aspect of Motolinia's perception of the Mexican Indian is apparent in his following words: ". . . they are extremely patient and long-suffering, as gentle as sheep. They are humble and obedient to all, either willingly or of necessity, and they know only how to serve and work."[44]

If Motolinía, as a good-hearted and charitable missionary, perceived the Indians as well-intentioned and good-natured people, other Spaniards were of different opinions. The latter could be represented by Gonzalo de Aranda who believed that although at first sight the natives seemed good Christians, they were "basically evil and born to be subjected."[45] The Dominican Fray Gonzalo Lucero represents an intermediary point of view between those of Motolinía and

Aranda. This friar, missionary among the Indians of Mixteca, considered the natives what Saint Paul termed "ad oculum servientes", who hardly ever did good or avoided evil except when they felt they were being watched.[46]

Where charity and love were not acting as mollifiers, the contempt many Spaniards felt for the Indians could reach extreme proportions. In 1550 a Spanish encomendero exclaimed:

> There are two species of people in Castile, the nobles and the plebeians, hidalgos and villains. The hidalgo, the noble, wants to be taken by love and gentleness, to be treated with respect and courtesy and with good reasoning and on honorable terms; they can make both the wax and the wick, as they say in our country. But the laborer, the villain, is hard and stubborn; and since he has more of feeling than he has of reason, four strokes with a stick work better on him and persuade him easier than all the discourses of Aristotle. This difference God took away from the natives of the Indies; every one of them, everywhere, in every occasion and in every kind of business are of the second class; they are sons of servile fear; they want to be taken by rigor, to be shown an ominous mien; they do not want to be heard or listened to, nor to be paid attention for their services; and whenever they fancy that their services have been major, they have to be paid with a slap on their faces; it is better for them to be punished so they understand that they have sinned; and the whip and the stick should first bang above their necks to admonish them for their dereliction; because in this manner they turn solicitous, diligent, cautious, without getting ideas; and they carry out a command sooner than it takes to give it. On the contrary, if they are taken with gentleness, love and affection, they do nothing; they are careless, lazy, idle; they depreciate the one who is in command; they think that they are being treated gently for lack of strength, and with this fancy a thousand grievances will rise.[47]

Arguments of different kinds were used to demonstrate the desirability of subordinating the Indians to individual Spaniards.

Some of these arguments were intended to prove that the institution of the encomienda had its foundation in the natural order of things, an order that proclaimed the subordination of the inferior to the superior. As the priest Gómez Maraver explained:

> The security of this land of New Spain depends upon the existence of a good number of rich and powerful Spaniards strong enough to resist the force of the Indians. . . . If the hidalgos and noble men are feeble and meagre, constrained and of miserable poverty, the land would easily be lost for having distorted the order set by God in everything; for everywhere we see that the inferior is ruled by the superior. . . . and among the birds and animals some species are superior to others, and in every city of the world there is a head and strong limbs which govern it, and all kingdoms depend for their support on wealthy knights. . . . If this is so, why should an Empire such as this one, large, rich and powerful, bounteous and fertile, aggrandized with so many people of different kinds, be changed into a monster with no head, making all the knights and noble people of these parts poor and miserable and equal to the rest? Hence we think the Spaniards should not be deprived of their Indians, for to do this would be a very injurious and pernicious thing, much in disservice to God Our Lord and His Majesty.[48]

There still remained for the Spanish theoreticians the difficult task of reconciling the status of free vassal, which had been officially granted to the Indian, with the deep conviction most of the Spaniards held that the natives were there to serve and obey them. No one accomplished this task more skillfully than Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda (1490-1573), historian, hellenist, protegé and official translator (from Greek) of the Pope, and chronicler of the Court of Spain.

Sepúlveda, in accordance with Aristotelian philosophy, believed that certain men had been endowed by nature to be lords, while others were destined to be serfs. He included the Spaniards among the first and the Indians of the New World among the second. The Indians were visibly inferior to the Spaniards in moral virtues and intelligence and as such it was in their own interests

> to be placed under the authority of civilized and virtuous princes, so that they may learn from the might, wisdom and law of their conquerors, to practice better morals, worthier customs, and a more civilized way of life.

The Indians were as inferior in these characteristics to the Spaniards "as children are to adults, as women are to men."[49]

Sepúlveda, however, did not propose that the Indians should be reduced to slavery, something which would be clearly contrary to their status of "free vassals". The state he assigned to the Indian was to combine the rights and duties of a trusted, tribute-paying, and perhaps wage-earning servant under seigneurial rule and those of a minor, subject to paternalistic rule. This new status, moreover, should be flexible enough to allow the Indians to earn new degrees of liberty in accordance with their attested achievement in civilization and Christianity. Nor should the Indians be pampered with liberties above their "nature and condition", for this might make them want to win back their former status. Nor should they be oppressed with undue hardships to the extent of exciting them to rebellion against the Spaniards. In due time, Sepúlveda suggested, the Indians might gain in maturity and prudence enough to assume minor responsibilities. Sepúlveda specified that the Indians were to be kept in a condition that would combine the principle of herile (the secular, seignorial and vertical relationship between the master and the servant, which might or might not involve remuneration) and paterno (the authoritarian and diffuse principle of familial dependency ties). In theory, then, the relationship between the Indians and the Spaniards would be a fusion of the master-servant and parent-child relationship of a household; a combination of legal contract and natural tie, underscoring in both senses the submission of the Indian.[50]

The colonists of New Spain were very pleased with the ideas expounded by Sepúlveda. The town council of Mexico city voted on February 8, 1554, to send him "some jewels and clothing from this land to the value of 200 pesos" in recognition for his services and "to encourage him in the future."[51]

NOTES

[1] J. Bayard Morris, p. 132.

[2] Ibidem, p. 31.

[3] Ibidem, p. 21.

[4] Anonymous Conqueror, Narrative of Some Things of New Spain and of the Great City of Temistitan-Mexico; Trans. by Marshall H. Saville, Nilford House, Boston, 1972, p. 15.

[5] The mines of tin and iron must have been found by the Spaniards because the native Mexicans never used either tin or iron.

[6] Ibidem above, pp. 15-16.

[7] Fray Toribio de Motolinía, History of the Indians of New Spain; trans. and ed. by Elizabeth A. Foster, Berkeley, Cal., 1950, Book 3, Chapter 9.

[8] Letter from the Judicial Council of Vera Cruz to Charles V,

(J.B. Morris, p. 21).

[9] Third Letter, (J.B. Morris, p. 230). The opinions of the learned men Cortés is referring to were similar to those of Peter Martyr who maintained that: ". . . it is towards the south, not towards the frozen north, that those who seek fortune should bend their way; for everything at the equator is rich." Spices, Peter Martyr believed, were to be found under, or near, the equator for "the celestial exhalations transferred to terrestrial substances adapted to receive them only produce aromatic odors in the countries lying beneath the equator. . . ." (Eighth Decade, Book 10, op. cit.).

[10] Third Letter, J.B. Morris, p. 237.

[11] Ibidem, p. 253.

[12] Bernal Díaz del Castillo, The Conquest of New Spain; Trans. by J.M. Cohen, Baltimore, Maryland, Penguin Books, p. 413.

[13] Historia de las Indias, Book 3, Chapter 136.

[14] Seventh Decade, Book 1, op. cit.

[15] Fourth Letter, J.B. Morris, p. 285.

[16] J.B. Morris, p. 50.

[17] Ibidem, p. 59.

[18] Ibidem, p. 67.

[19] Cortés is reported by Peter Martyr as saying that he had never seen a royal palace or a princely establishment in Spain, that was not inferior to 70 palaces in the city of Tenochititlan. (Fifth Decade, Book 4).

[20] J.B. Morris, p. 94.

[21] Ibidem, p. 240.

[22] Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico*; Trans. by A.P. Maudslay, Harper and Brothers Pub., New York and London, 1925, Book 5, Chapter 61.

[23] Ibidem, Book 8, Chapter 87.

[24] Anonymous Conqueror, *Narrative of Some Things. . .* , Chapters 3, 6, 22, 12 and 15.

[25] Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *The Discovery and Conquest. . .*, Book 3, Chapter 35.

[26] Letter from the Judicial Council of Vera Cruz to the Emperor, (J.B. Morris, p. 24).

[27] Ibidem, p. 25.

[28] Anonymous Conqueror, *Narrative of Some Things. . .* , Chapter 15.

[29] Letter to the Emperor from the Judicial Council of Vera Cruz, (J.B. Morris, p. 24).

[30] Ibidem, p. 271.

[31] Ibidem, p. 240.

[32] Instructions of Charles V To Hernán Cortés, June 26, 1953. In *Documentos inéditos de ultramar*, vol. 9, pp. 167-181. Cited by L.B. Simpson, *The Encomienda in New Spain*; Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1966, p. 58.

[33] Letter of Hernán Cortés to Charles V, October 15, 1524; in Documentos inéditos para la historia de Mexico, vol. 1, pp. 470-483. Cited by L.B. Simpson, p. 61.

[34] *Historia general. . .* , Book 33, Chapter 48.

[35] In a "corregimiento" the Indians were placed directly under the jurisdiction of the Crown, and their tributes were determined and

collected by royal officials.

[36] Letter of the Audiencia of Mexico to the Empress, March 30, 1531; Ternaux-Compans, Voyages, 2eme série, vol. 5, pp. 128-149. Cited by L.B. Simpson, p. 90.

[37] Silvio Zavala, La encomienda indiana; Madrid, Centro de estudios históricos, 1935, p. 68.

[38] Ibidem, p. 106.

[39] This cédula was an outgrowth of the New Laws of 1542 which revoked or limited the right of the Spaniards to service and tribute from the Indians. As happened with the New Laws, this cédula could not be effectively enforced.

[40] Ternaux-Compans, Voyages, vol. 5, p. 121.

[41] Ibidem, pp. 183-197. (Cited by L.B. Simpson, p. 95).

[42] Fray Toribio de Motolinía, History of the Indians. . . , Book 2, Chapter 4.

[43] Ibidem.

[44] Ibidem, Book 1, Chapter 14.

[45] Gonzalo de Aranda, Letter of May 10, 1544; in Epistolario de la Nueva España, vol. 4, p. 225.

[46] Robert Ricard, The Spiritual Conquest of Mexico; Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1966, p. 107.

[47] Antonio de Remesal (1619), Historia general de las Indias Occidentales y particular de la gobernación de Chiapa y Guatemala, p. 451. Cited by Sakari Sariola, Power and Resistance: The Colonial Heritage of Latin-America, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1972, p. 151.

[48] Letter of the Priest Gómez Maraver to His Majesty, Mexico,

1544; in *Documentos inéditos de América*, vol. 8, pp. 199-212.

[49] Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, *Demócrates Segundo* o de las justas causas de la guerra contra los indios; Angel Losada trans., Madrid, Colegio Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas, 1951, p. 33.

[50] Sakari Sariola, *Power and Resistance: . . .* , pp. 46-55.

[51] L. Hanke, *Aristotle and the American Indians*, p. 76.

CONCLUSION

What were the cultural attitudes of the early sixteenth century Spaniard towards the world and life? What desires and aspirations motivated him to action and influenced his interpretations of the resources of the New World?

These are the questions we have tried to answer in this thesis. It has been shown that the search for honor was the main manifestation of the desires and aspirations which motivated the early sixteenth century Spaniard to action and determined many of his attitudes towards the world and life. The territories of the Indies were seen as a place offering abundant opportunities to gain honor and wealth. The perception of the New World environment and the interpretation of its resources were made keeping these objectives in mind.

Our study is focused on a society of discontented people; discontented in the sense that many early sixteenth century Spaniards felt dissatisfied with the role they played in society and experienced a strong desire, an almost "vital need", to improve their status. The best representative of this state of affairs is the Castilian hidalgo; a man whose whole life centered on gaining and upholding honor, and who felt secure and firm in the estimation of his virtues and the inherent worth of his person. His desire for honor was accompanied by an unshakable belief in his capacity to gain it. When the hidalgo arrived in the New World, his perceptions and evaluations of the natives and environment were guided by the image he had wishfully formed of what he was seeing and going to see. As a consequence of this, the appraisal of the worth of the natives and the estimate of their characters became in many ways independent of the nature, culture and actions of the Indian. Driven by his desire to maintain seigneury, the hidalgo did not fail to see in the non-Christian Indian a man of inferior qualities who could be made to serve and obey the more "virtuous" Spaniard. It mattered little if the Indian in question was the more primitive Arawak or the more sophisticated Indian of the high plateaus of Mexico; in either case, the Indian was contemplated as the servant of the Spaniard. The appraisal of the actions, customs, habits and character of the natives,was not made objectively, but according to a value system and the necessities derived from the desire to fulfill certain aspirations. This is why, whatever the individual or group characteristics of the Indian, he was portrayed as inferior to the Spaniard.

In respect to the biophysical environment of the New World, it seems fair to state that the Spaniards gave proof of very little interest for the development of its natural resources. This disregard for the production of natural wealth existed in spite of the fact that the Spaniards were well aware of the fertility and productive capacity of the soil, and of the many advantages offered by the natural environment. But, as Las Casas said: "all are occupied in the damned exercise of searching for gold and not in creating natural wealth by making the earth bear fruit". Even the search for gold, however, was conditioned upon the availability of Indian laborers, for without them few Spaniards would employ themselves at this task, as materially rewarding as it might prove.

In the mind of the Spaniard honor came first, material wealth second. To esteem money and material possessions, or to labor for the acquisition of them through means other than the exercise of valor, was considered disgraceful and unworthy. Las Casas, who, during his early years as encomendero in the island of Cuba, demonstrated interest and industry in running and administering his sources of income, has related that he took the decision to dedicate his life to the cause of the Indians just at the time when he started to be deemed by the other settlers as greedy, for "they saw that he (Las Casas) was very industrious and paid a lot of attention to hisestate, and the mines, and all the other things".[1]

On this score Oviedo makes an interesting comment when he says:

> Many come to the Indies thinking that to be seasoned in the use of arms is enough to make one rich. I say that it would be of more use if they were knowledgable at working in tasks which are honest and necessary to human life. Those that come to this land with assignment of office or with the intention of trading merchandise will make a good living, and this same applies to those who understand agriculture and livestock raising and to those who are artisans, but more than anyone else; clerks and copyists will become rapidly rich, for there are few of these in the Indies.[2]

The existence of this type of attitude towards work and the accumulation of wealth among the Spaniards living in the Indies is confirmed clearly by Las Casas:

> In general, all those who have dedicated their efforts to the obtaining of gold always lived in necessity and, at times, were in prison for debts. Better off were the ones whose sources

> of income derived from livestock raising and agriculture. But even the more fortunate ones among these ended up with nothing, for with their misguided investments and excesses in clothing and dress and trappings and many other vanities, all their wealth evaporated rapidly and they never thrived nor were able to show off with success.[3]

The existence of this state of affairs among the Spaniards in the Indies is of great importance for it bears directly upon the economic development of a society. It can be deduced from the results of this study that it is not the physical resources so much as the human resources of a society which determine the course of its economic development, if any, towards riches or towards poverty. It is what lies in the minds of men that determines, for the most part, the economic development of a society. We cannot understand the use of resources and the economic development of nations without a careful consideration of the world view and vital attitudes prevalent among the people who inhabit them. We could go a step further and conceive, as the economist W.K. Boulding has done, that the wealth of a nation is a by-product of certain elements in its culture, cumulated through years. Over a broad range of human societies within the extremes of the Eskimo and the desert nomad, if one is rich and another poor, it is not because of anything inherent in the natural resources or in the genetic make-up of the people, but because of the cumulative effects which are derived from certain attitudes and outlooks on the world and life.[4]

Although far more research is indicated before definite conclusions can be drawn, the evidence presented in this thesis has been organized according to a pattern which tends to support the applicability of the theoretical model shown in Fig. 4. The value system of the early sixteenth century Spaniard has been shown to centre around the concept of gaining and upholding honor. The initial perceptions of the natives and lands of the New World served to create an image portraying the new territories as places where honor could be gained by participating in the conquest and where the realization of a lordly life was made possible through the system of encomiendas and the wealth in precious metals which, it was believed, existed almost everywhere. The use of the resources of the new environment was made in accordance with the nature of this image. That is to say, the indigenous people were compelled to work in a manner that would allow the Spaniards to carry on seigneurial lives and, when possible, obtain rapid wealth in precious metals. The initial image portraying the natives as inferior beings was very consistent with the view the Spaniards had themselves as a highly virtuous and successful people whose destiny was to rule the world.

In view of this state of affairs, it is not surprising that, during the early part of the sixteenth century, the initial image the Spaniards had formed of the natives and lands in the New World suffered little modification. The voices of Las Casas and other sympathizers of the Indians had an impact on the Spanish conscience but this impact was not sufficiently strong to alter significantly the image portraying the natives as inferior beings destined to serve and obey the more "virtuous" Spaniard.

A similar degree of stability appears also to exist in the image portraying the natural environment of the New World as a haven of natural wealth. Precious metals, above everything else, were seen as the main foundation of this wealth. Gold and silver were thought to exist almost everywhere: when the search for those metals in a region did not come up to the expectations a new image was created which assured the existence of the desired riches in regions further apart.

Much more research is needed to make possible the enunciation of exact propositions on the complex nature of the early sixteenth century image of the New World and its development through time. The various set of factors affecting the creation and modification of images are difficult to identify. The complexity and magnitude of the problem with which this thesis is concerned does not allow for considerations which can be reduced to set formulae. Absolute statement cannot be made when the evidence to support them is lacking. The formulation and attempted verification of a hypothesis and the use of a certain methodology are only tools which serve to make tentative steps that will hopefully lead to a more enlightened view on the ties that exist between images, perception and behaviour.

NOTES

[1] Historia de las Indias, Book 3, Chapter 79. Las Casas came from a family of conversos; this fact may serve to explain his good business sense as an encomendero.

[2] Historia general . . ., Book 28, Chapter 6.

[3] Historia de las Indias, Book 2, Chapter 6.

[4] For these and related ideas see Kenneth E. Boulding, Beyond Economics: Essays on Society, Religion and Ethics, Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 1968.

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